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by

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Dedication

To Dr. Peter Tyson

Abstract

This thesis represents a study of social character types in the works of Hermann Sudermann (1857-1928). By selecting a wide range of such figures, the intention is to analyze the traits and themes common to each type and to synthesize in this manner a basic character model specific to each category. Among the types considered are the aristocrat, the pastor, the peasant, the artist and the Jew. The conclusion aims at interpreting the author's essential perspectives on these figures, and eventually to establish the underlying philosophy that links them throughout his career.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Hermann Sudermann's career as a playwright and novelist spans several decades of German history from the time of Bismarck through World War I and the Weimar Republic. As such, his works reflect a wide range of the changes, social, political and economic, that propelled Germany into the twentieth century. The controversy that surrounded him during his life-time was at odds with the general popularity he enjoyed in his homeland and abroad. In spite of the criticism (dominated by the brilliant polemics of Kerr and Harden) that rejected his works as trivial, Sudermann's plays and novels remained, till after World War I, widely performed and published.

Some of the impetus for the continuing interest in Hermann Sudermann stems from the importance of his contribution to the genre of *Heimatkunst*. Critics considering the history of this field have recognized Sudermann's service in opening up this rich area of East Prussian and Lithuanian literature, along with writers such as Wiechert and Agnes Miegel. For Miegel especially, her countryman deserved the highest accolades for having uncovered the particular fascination of this bleak yet beautiful land. As Wilhelm Matull says:

> Für Menschen, denen in einer hektischer werdenden Zeit das heimatlich-Ursprüngliche etwas bedeutet, die ihre Landschaft und deren Menschen mit- oder nacherleben wollen, gibt es keinen treffenderen

> Zugang als durch Hermann Sudermann. Er hat seine memelländische und damit ostpreussische Heimat in prachtvollem Können und ihre Wesensart zutiefst erfassend so dargestellt, dass Agnes Miegel Hermann Sudermann das bleibende Verdienst zugebilligt wissen wollte, er habe als erster Ostpreussen für die Literatur entdeckt.[1]

Studies in this area have, in spite of all controversy, established Sudermann's reputation as an important writer.

Hermann Sudermann was born on 30th. September 1857 in Matziken (Heydekrug) in the Memelland as the oldest son of Johann and Dorothea Sudermann. His father was a rural brewer of Mennonite descent who soon fell upon hard times. A poignant account of the family's poverty is to be found in Sudermann's autobiography *Das Bilderbuch meiner Jugend* (1922), which describes the humiliation and frustration of these years. While never actually destitute, Sudermann's parents found the problem of providing an education for the growing boy a major one; his mother managed with great difficulty to pay for much of it. When the money ran out, he was apprenticed to the chemist Settegast in Heydekrug (a profession he held in common with men like Fontane); but this ended when an old injury flared up, making impossible the long hours of standing behind the counter. Returning with the aid of his mother and his relatives to his education, he attended the Gymnasium in Tilsit, graduating with distinction in 1875.

---

[1] Wilhelm Matull, "Hermann Sudermann 1857-1928", in *Grosse Deutsche aus Ostpreussen*. Ed. Wilhelm Matull (München: Gräfe und Unzer Verlag, n.d.), p. 174.

In the same year, Sudermann began his studies at the University of Königsberg, concentrating on language and linguistics. His first real attempts at writing date from this period, but remained unsuccessful. He left Königsberg in 1877 and joined the University of Berlin, studying language and linguistics with professors such as Eugen Dühring. However, back in Heydekrug, he was plagued by self-doubt, financial problems and the ill-luck that dogged his writing career, a situation that led him to write to the well-known poet Hans Hopfen for advice. In 1878, in Berlin, Sudermann was engaged by Hopfen as a tutor, and later continued this work in several other households. His attempt to work, continue his studies and write at the same time soon ended due to the excessive strain on his health. At this point he turned to journalism. An increasing and life-long interest in politics led to a meeting with Heinrich Rickert, who employed the young man as the editor of the liberal weekly *Deutsches Reichsblatt*.

Frau Sorge, perhaps Sudermann's best-known work, appeared in 1887, a novel that recaptured the bitterness and humiliation of his own childhood. This was followed in rapid succession by other works such as *Im Zwielicht*, *Geschwister* and *Der Katzensteg*, all of which enjoyed a moderate success.

The real breakthrough for Sudermann came, however, with the premiere of his play *Die Ehre* on 27th. November 1889 in Berlin's Lessing Theater. He was instantly a celebrity, hailed as the rightful heir to the heritage of Schiller.

Finally established in Berlin society, he married the young writer Clara Lauckner, a widow with three children; Sudermann's only child, a daughter, was born of this marriage in 1892.

Die Ehre was followed by the debacle of *Sodoms Ende* (1891), Sudermann's attack on the life-style of the Berlin society that had lionized him. From this point, the initial exaggerated praise of his talent on the part of the critics gradually turned to open hostility and fuel was added to the flames with the huge international success of his play *Heimat* (1893), a classic vehicle for stars such as Eleanore Duse and Sarah Bernhardt.

Sudermann himself remained a very visible public figure with liberal sympathies, instrumental in several important movements of the time. He played an essential role in the Lex Heinze affair by uniting all literary figures in this battle against State censorship.[2] To prevent the recurrence of such attempts on the part of the government, he also aided in the founding of the Goethe-Bund, becoming its first chairman.

The turning point in his career came in 1902. While Sudermann was now firmly established as an important writer, the increasingly bitter attacks by influential critics such as Alfred Kerr not only against his works but also against his character created feelings of resentment that finally found expression in the pamphlet *Die Verrohung der Theaterkritik*. In this work he appealed for higher standards of literary criticism, citing many cases of tasteless, even crude reviews of contemporary plays and novels. By descending to the level of a personal attack on Alfred Kerr and Maximilian Harden, however, he seriously injured his case and the ensuing outrage was devastating to his career. Though his works continued to be well received by the general public, he himself gradually came to be passed over by the critics or dismissed as a writer of no importance.

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[2] Arno Panzer's essay in a recent volume of Sudermann criticism establishes the importance of his contribution to this struggle. (Arno Panzer, "Hermann Sudermann - eine politische Biographie," in *Hermann Sudermann. Werk und Wirkung*. Ed. Walter T. Rix [Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1980], pp. 17-20).

The outbreak of hostilities in 1914 did not interrupt Sudermann's writing, though he threw himself whole-heartedly into the war effort. From this period comes his enduring masterpiece *Litauische Geschichten*, his answer to the anarchy and suffering around him. In the years following the war, Sudermann's obscurity increased, in spite of the publication of several major works such as *Der tolle Professor* (1926). The novel *Die Frau des Steffen Tromholt* (1927) is an intensely personal account of his long, loving, yet problematic marriage to Clara Lauckner (mother of the writer Rolf Lauckner), whose sudden death prompted its creation. Works such as *Purzelchen* (1928), while successful, did not alter the fact that he was an increasingly unknown quantity to a younger generation of writers who identified him, if at all, with the outdated ideals of the pre-war years. Sudermann died on 21st. November 1928 in Berlin while at work on yet another novel; his residence Blankensee now lies in the German Democratic Republic and his literary estate in the Schiller National Museum in Marbach on the Neckar.

Part of the problem in any study of Sudermann's works lies, of course, in the controversy that surrounded him. The difficulty is centred in the polemical nature of this controversy that concerns not only his achievements but also his character. Any objective analysis is also made more problematic by the absence of an official biography, and the letters to his wife, edited by Dr. Irmgard Leux, fill this gap only to a certain extent. For much of the information on the author's personal attitudes and background, one must rely upon his autobiography *Das Bilderbuch meiner Jugend* (1922), even though this work concentrates on his childhood and his years as an impoverished student in Berlin, touching not at all upon his subsequent fame. In addition, much of the standard criticism tends to accept and recycle previous judgements instead of attempting a fresh approach. As Walter T. Rix says in the foreword to the most recent volume of essays on Sudermann:

> Das Urteil über Sudermann hat die Kritik bereits zu seinen Lebzeiten gesprochen. Die Folgezeit hat es nur bestätigt. In der allgemeinen Vorstellung sank er schliesslich herab zur Verkörperung dessen, was man der Wilhelminischen Geisteswelt insbesondere nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg an unehrlicher Ethik und tönendem Pathos vorwarf. Damit war der Blick für die angemessene Einschätzung Sudermanns schon früh verstellt. [...] Nicht Sudermann hatte sich überlebt, sondern die Kritik hatte sich derart festgefahren, dass sie unfähig war, sich auf die fortdauernde dichterische Kraft Sudermanns

einzustellen.[3]

In recent years, however, with time and distance, a more objective appraisal of Hermann Sudermann has become possible. The collected essays edited by Rix and the recent dissertations by Gunter Walter Richter and Ingrid Nohl all tend to emphasize the primary texts and not rely so heavily upon traditional criticism.

This particular study is intended primarily as an interpretation of fundamental character traits in the different social types that appear in Sudermann's works. In such a project, the emphasis must, by necessity, lie upon a close analysis of the primary texts in a period that spans over forty years. The purpose of this study is to select a particular type, such as the figure of the Junker, and to ascertain its specific traits and variations and the changes it may undergo within the larger context of Sudermann's own development as an artist. The varying themes he elaborated on in each type, the personal views and sympathies (sometimes implicit, sometimes outspoken) expressed through his portrayal of these characters all provide a rich field of study.

A problem that is inherent to this project is the lack of critical consensus with regard to Sudermann's techniques of characterization. In commenting on Sudermann's characters, the critics in general tend to concentrate upon the figures in his dramas rather than on his works as a whole. The reactions range from the almost total rejection of Kerr to the open admiration of Eduard Engel and Max Lorenz. A common criticism (and one that usually refers to his dramas) is directed against his excessively simplistic characterization and his habit of manipulating his figures to prove some tedious moral point. For Mathers, Sudermann's characters were improbable:

---

[3] Walter T. Rix, "Vorwort", *Hermann Sudermann. Werk und Wirkung*, p. 7.

> It is therefore easy to understand why so many of the later critics leveled against Sudermann the charge that his characters were not true to life; such a charge required only a cursory examination of the earlier plays. The possibility of finding characters in daily life cut from such impossibly whole cloth as those of *Heimat*, for example, is extremely small.[4]

Critics like Landsberg recognized Sudermann's tendency to create definite types, not only in his dramas but also in his novels:

> Aber auch Sudermanns Romanfiguren sind *Typen*. Sie haben die individuellen Züge abgestreift, sie repräsentieren Gattungen: den energischen, treuherzig-barschen Gutsherrn, den derbfrommen Landpfarrer, den knöchernen Landrat.[5]

In the same way Ludwig Goldstein pointed out the excessive colourfulness of Sudermann's characters:

> Er liebte die grellen, bunten, lauten Farben und damit die schreienden Kontraste - Gegenüberstellungen, die effektvoll, aber nicht immer wahr und überzeugend sein konnten. So wirken auch die gar zu einseitig beleuchteten Charaktere in seinen Stücken gewöhnlich überscharf und hart. Sie sind meist entweder schwarz oder weiss, d.h. böse oder gute Menschen. Die *Misch*rasse, die dazwischen

---

[4] Rodney Harold Mathers, "Sudermann and the Critics. An Analysis of the Criticism of Sudermann's Works and of his Revolt against the Literary Criticism of his Time," Diss. University of Southern California 1951, p. 17.

[5] Hans Landsberg, *Hermann Sudermann* (Berlin: Gose & Tetzlaff, 1905), p. 28.

> liegt und die die Mehrheit ausmacht, ist bei ihm wenig, fast gar nicht vertreten.[6]

On the other hand, Sudermann was not lacking in defenders. Lewisohn, for example, felt Sudermann's characterization and technique as a dramatist had few equals:

> Although his is no free creation spirit, he has succeeded, again and again, in projecting characters or suggesting an atmosphere which, in any country but his own, would have placed him in the front rank of modern dramatists.[7]

Critics such as Bockstahler admired the robust characterization in Sudermann's works that conjured up creatures of flesh and blood displaying immense tenacity in life's struggle:

> In the face of Ibsen's despair, Sudermann's characters have a superabundance of life struggling to be put to use; a reserve power that is equal to any occasion.[8]

Lorenz also refers to this intrinsic vigour of characterization when he says:

> Sudermann ist der Herr und Schöpfer seiner Figuren, während Hauptmann in gewissem Sinne ihr Sklave ist.[9]

For Matull, Sudermann's fame was the direct result of an effective characterization:

> Seine Gestalten waren grossartig konzipiert, das Milieu echt getroffen, jede Persönlichkeit beinahe anatomisch getreu geprägt, auch die

---

[6] Ludwig Goldstein, *Wer war Hermann Sudermann? Gedächtnisrede* (Königsberg i. Pr.: Gräfe und Unzer Verlag, 1929), p. 21.
[7] Ludwig Lewisohn, *The Modern Drama. An Essay in Interpretation* (London: Martin Secker, 1916), p. 129.
[8] O.L. Bockstahler, "Sudermann and Ibsen," *German Quarterly*, 5 (1932), 56.
[9] Max Lorenz, *Die Litteratur am Jahrhundert-Ende* (Stuttgart: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1900), p. 180.

> Detailschilderungen genau ausgepinselt. Fast schattenrisshaft standen seine Figuren da, waren nicht Literatur, sondern Leben, und das alles erschien zugleich naiv-naturhaft und in der Wirkung reisserisch gekonnt.[10]

In direct contradiction to this perhaps excessive praise, Alfred Kerr condemns Sudermann's dramatic figures as wholly theatrical:

> Was Frank Wedekind gibt, sind Gedanken und kein Drama. Was Hermann Sudermann gibt, ist ein Drama und kein Gedanke. Wo liegt das Drama? [...] Schrecklich. Hier steht einer, der nichts zu sagen hat, es aber mit Knallkraft sagt. Der da wandelt, ist sozusagen ein Nur-Dramatiker. Ein Dramatiker ohne Wahrheit, ohne Inhalt, ohne Charaktere: nur ein Dramatiker. Sudermann ist der vom Intellekt befreite, reine Gedanke der Bühnenkunst.[11]

Thus it may be seen that the polemical views on Sudermann in this area contribute to the difficulty of such a study. Most of the criticism treats specific aspects of different plays or novels and does not concentrate upon the increasing complexity of a particular type within Sudermann's works. Richter's dissertation, titled *Die Gesellschaftskritik im Prosawerk Hermann Sudermanns*, concentrates on certain types in the author's prose works as far as they indicate social criticism on his part. It generally excludes the figures in his dramas, which will be included in this project.

The main purpose here is therefore to study Sudermann's portrayal of specific types and to ascertain, if possible, whether common traits exist for the figures in each category. It will also seek any obvious changes in this portrayal with the progress of time. A summary of such common factors and fundamental changes in style and attitudes over the years may also make it possible to arrive at certain conclusions about Sudermann's work in general. The chronological analysis of the texts will perhaps bring out fresh aspects and insights into his works which were denied to critics who concerned themselves only with a specific play or novel or a specific character instead of seeking a comprehensive appraisal of Sudermann's works as an organic whole.

---

[10] Wilhelm Matull, *Grosse Deutsche aus Ostpreussen*, p. 168.
[11] Alfred Kerr, *Die Welt im Drama*, cited by Klaus Matthias, "Kerr und die Folgen. Analyse der Sudermann-Kritik als Perspektive einer Neubewertung seiner Dramen," in *Hermann Sudermann. Werk und Wirkung*. Ed. Walter T. Rix, p. 59.

The methodology applied in this project assumes a concentration upon a wide social range of types from royalty to the proletariat, from officers and artists to peasants and students. There remains some overlapping of categories, as when a member of royalty enters politics (Prince Usingen in *Es lebe das Leben*). In such cases, the character is classified according to its dominant role and analysed as such. Within each group, the study proceeds chronologically, narrowing down the basic character model and then establishing the variations on it. Once the fundamental traits are fixed, one may pose certain questions. What is the basic theme stressed by the author in each category? Is the emphasis on the complexity of the human spirit rather than on a social message or literary dogma? Does Sudermann show a tendency to typecast his figures or do they reveal a growing complexity with time? Where does Sudermann himself stand as a writer? Can he be classified with the realist tradition or does he belong in the ranks of the Naturalists? Many critics have considered this question without coming to a definite conclusion; though Sudermann's technique is superficially Naturalist, his dramas and novels present a value-oriented, personal view of society, touching upon social issues without any reference to specific political sympathies.

For Alfred Kerr, Sudermann was another Kotzebue, lacking all integrity, reducing the German theatre to a money-making concern. For Franz Werfel, he was one of Germany's truly great writers, who bore his constant humiliation at the hands of the critics with grace and dignity. This study does not aim at resolving the controversy; it is intended to fill only one of several gaps in the history of Sudermann criticism and add yet another piece to the portrait of a complex and neglected artist.

II. THE ARISTOCRATS

The figure of the German aristocrat appears so often in Sudermann's plays and novels that it seems appropriate to begin this study with it. The analysis is based upon the role of the aristocrat in each particular work, e.g. as a member of royalty, a country squire or an army officer or a politician.

Over 120 aristocrats are portrayed by Sudermann with varying degrees of importance. These figures may be grouped into several main categories, for instance royalty, politicians and administrators, the Junkers and army officers. The intention here is to analyse traits within each group in order to ascertain if there is indeed a common type or common themes. Each character will be studied according to its dominant role in the work in order to prevent excessive overlapping of the various categories. Since the aristocracy is a class frequently exposed to social criticism in literature, we may, through this study, acquire certain insights into Sudermann's perspective on the different groups of nobility.

A. THE ROYAL FIGURES

The first category to be studied is the small number of royal figures. Of 17 main characters, 10 are male and 7 are female. Except for Teja, they tend not to be the direct focus of attention, but play a motivating role for the action, in that they themselves undergo no character development, but provide by their passive presence the catalyst for the main figures to change or grow in stature. Four of these royal types are actual historical characters (Teja, Herodes, Alarich and Honorius), and the author has apparently maintained a basic accuracy concerning their lives and their fate.

THE MAJOR CHARACTERS

1. Teja (*Teja*, 1896)
2. Balthilda (*Teja*)
3. Königin (*Das Ewig-Männliche*, 1896)
4. Herodes (*Johannes*, 1898)
5. Herodias (*Johannes*)
6. Witte (*Die drei Reiherfedern*, 1899)
7. Königin (*Die drei Reiherfedern*)
8. Usingen (*Es lebe das Leben*, 1902)
9. The two princes (*Sturmgeselle Sokrates*, 1903)
10. Marie v. Geldern (*Rosen*, 1907)
11. Honorius (*Die Lobgesänge des Claudian*, 1914)
12. Kaiserin (*Die Lobgesänge des Claudian*)

13. Alarich (*Die Lobgesänge des Claudian*)
14. Max v. Barenburg (*Heilige Zeit*, 1921)
10. Aribert (*Der tolle Professor*, 1926)
11. Elisabeth (*Die Frau des Steffen Tromholt*, 1927)

Teja (1896)

In this one-act play (the first in the trilogy titled *Morituri*) the action is focussed upon Teja, King of the Ostrogoths, in the night before his final battle.[1] The entire play takes place within the confines of the royal tent and in the space of one night, reflecting not only the pressure and restrictions under which the Ostrogoths are forced to live, but also the fleeting nature of their very existence.

The tent itself is a clue to Teja's character, being designed not for a sybaritic ruler, but for a warrior lacking the time and inclination for luxuries of any kind.

> Links, erhöht, der roh gezimmerte Thronsitz des Königs. In der Mitte ein Tisch mit Sitzen ringsum. - Rechts das Lager des Königs, aus zusammengerafften Fellen bestehend, darüber ein Gestell mit mannigfachen Waffen. Fackelringe rechts und links.[2]

Even the proximity of the weapons to the bed indicates, poignantly, the lack of repose that Teja is permitted. The battle conditions alone are not a reason for this trait of austerity; we see later how Teja repeatedly rejects any special privileges for himself which his warriors may not share, however simple they may be. Clues to his character abound even in the first lines. From the starving veterans guarding the tent, we learn that he has chosen to share their suffering in every respect. As one guard says to the other:

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[1] This theme may also be compared to Felix Dahn's *Kampf um Rom* that deals with the historic struggle of the Germanic tribes against the Empire.

[2] Hermann Sudermann, *Teja*, in *Dramatische Werke*, III (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1923), 295.

> Glaubst du denn, wir würden uns totschlagen lassen, rädern und spiessen und schänden lassen für ihn, wenn er mehr hätt' als wir? Glaubst du, wir würden hier liegen und wachen wie die Kettenhunde, wenn wir nicht wüssten, dass es nichts zu bewachen gibt? (216)

Teja, as we see, enjoys not only the respect but the devotion of these fierce warriors because his integrity forbids him to misuse his royalty. We are provided with further insights into his character in the third scene, which deals with his wedding according to Goth tradition. Teja is "finster und grübelnd" (297), neglecting to utter any word of welcome to his bride until reminded of her presence. He is clearly bored and irritated by the entire ritual and looks upon her as an additional burden to be borne. As he points out, a life spent in brutal warfare has not equipped him for any other mode of existence. However, Sudermann stresses the effort he makes in this moment of crisis to show Balthilda some courtesy, no matter how rough it may be. This kindness is the first hint that there is a softer side to Teja's character than one may suppose, given his intimidating manner:

> Verzeih mir, Königin, wenn ich dieses Wort nicht
> finde. Ich bin mitten in Schlachten herangewachsen,
> und eine andere Behausung hab' ich nie gekannt ...
> Du wirst sie schwerlich mit mir teilen wollen. (298)

We are shown that Teja's royalty has cost him any semblance of a private life, but at the same time, it has isolated him from human contact. While he has been elected to his position and not born to it, we see, nevertheless, that he pays a heavy price for this new responsibility. Sudermann portrays this royal figure as a bitter cynic, suffering from a gnawing sense of inferiority and the terrible knowledge that his task of protecting the Ostrogoths is hopeless. He is only too aware of the distrust his rule has awakened in the elders of the tribe, and of his own absolute unhappiness:

> ... Als einer, der nichts gehofft hat und nichts
> gewünscht hat sein Leben lang, so steh' ich vor
> euch, und so werd' ich fallen vor euch. (301)

We see that birth into the ranks of royalty is rarely depicted by Sudermann as a pleasurable or glamorous privilege; on the contrary, it is a life-long burden to be borne, bringing with it harsh responsibilities and inflicting a psychological isolation that damages the human spirit. It is his position as king that places Teja in the situation of having to choose for his people between surrender and an honourable death upon the battlefield. As we see, he decides for the latter, partly because the heavy burden of his kingship has destroyed the love of life natural to humanity. Teja is sick to the heart of his very existence; death to him is a longed-for release from this responsibility:

> ... Ich nehme morgen Speer und Schild und gehe mir
> auf eigene Faust das bisschen Tod erobern, nach dem
> ich lechze und lungere wie ein Dieb, seitdem ihr
> mich zum Herrn eurer verlorenen Sache machtet. (306)

The strength Teja might have derived from family or friends is denied him. It is obvious that the life he leads has not taught him the most elementary knowledge of the value of human relationships. His view of women and children, not as beloved creatures to be cherished and protected, but as so many extra mouths to be fed, demonstrates how far his personality has been distorted by the duties he has had to perform:

> Weib und Kind! Weib und Kind! Was geht das uns an!
> (308)

In all things Teja remains isolated, alienated from all about him. Even in the matter of religion, another royal duty, he is prepared to go through the rituals demanded by his office, but his soul remains detached. To Bishop Agila, he says:

> Bischof, ich bin deiner Kirche ein guter Diener
> gewesen. Ihr Tempel weihen, wie noch Totilas getan,
> das hab' ich nicht können, aber ich habe zu ihrem
> Heile getötet, was noch zu töten war ... (310)

The word "Diener" serves a distinct purpose here, indicating that Teja considers his faith, like his kingship, a task which involves certain sacrifices on his part. Even the word "töten", emphasized as it is, proves how his religious duties as king, which should celebrate life, only demand from him that he should command death. Teja's true dedication is to the warriors who follow him, and it is significant that Balthilda only succeeds in breaking through his defences against the most routine human contact when she agrees to give away the food she has brought to these famished veterans.

Sudermann correctly selects this action as the psychological turning point of the scene, throughout which Balthilda's spontaneity is constantly contrasted to Teja's suspicion and rigid reserve. For critics like Jung, the atmosphere of this one scene was welcomed as a change from the sordid machinations of plays like *Sodoms Ende*:

> Doch ist es dem Dichter von *Sodoms Ende* nicht hoch genug anzurechnen, dass auch nicht ein Hauch aus seinem Sodom herüberweht. Wir spüren die keusche Luft des alten Heldenliedes, und nur dadurch rückt Sudermann das kleine Drama auch in die historische Ferne.[3]

When he is confronted for the first time with a love that sees the person behind the crown, the barriers collapse at last in a storm of tears. Even in this extremity, Teja's only concern is his desperate need to maintain the royal image of unshakeable dignity. Thomas Duglor, in his essay on Sudermann, has accurately analysed this moment of spiritual crisis:

> In einer grossen Szene mit Bathilda [sic] - dem Gotenweib, das ihm in der letzten Nacht vor dem Untergang angetraut wird - bröckelt die starre Härte von ihm ab, die er vor den anderen zeigen muss; und in aufwühlender Sehnsucht streckt er die Hände aus nach der besonnten Zeit, die er hätte schaffen

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[3] Harry Jung, *Hermann Sudermann* (Minden in Westf., : Verlag von C. Marowsky, 1902), p. 25.

> können, wenn das Schicksal ihm die lichtvolleren Aufgaben nicht versperrt hätte. Es ist die dramatische Elegie von einem zuschanden gerichteten Seelentum, dieses Schicksal: ein einziger Akt von erschütternder Intensität.[4]

Teja's method of demonstrating final acceptance of Balthilda is again well within character; he offers to share with her the last crusts left of his meagre rations. As he says:

> Bring nur her! Wir teilen brüderlich - hä? - und dann reicht es für Beide. Willst du? (319)

Balthilda has finally been admitted into the ranks of those he will share his food with, those he will treat as his equals and brothers in battle. For Heinrich Hart, *Teja* is a trivial piece, written, as he claims, for the tastes of the Berlin female social circle:

> Mit solcher Geziertheit verschminkt Sudermann denn auch sein Drama, und so kriegt er es fertig, den Helden Teja zu einem läppischen Fant zu verkleinern, der es noch in letzter Stunde lernt, dass es lohnender ist,"für die Weiber," als für Volk oder Ehre oder Götter" in den Tod zu gehen.[5]

Hart sees Teja's gradual relaxation as frivolous immaturity. For Waldemar Kawerau, however, the facts point to the very opposite. Teja, emotionally starved, actually undergoes a transformation in which the artificial behaviour required by his role as king is replaced by new and natural feelings and sensations, such as hunger, pleasure, laughter and mischief. This change is accurately described by Kawerau as the "Lebenstrieb" awakening[1] in a spirit which till now was condemned to an unnatural existence. It permits Teja to face his death with new grace:

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[4] Thomas Duglor, "Hermann Sudermann - ein Schaffen zwischen Beifall und Schmähung," in *Hermann Sudermann. Ein Dichter an der Grenzscheide zweier Welten. Der Wegweiser*, 33 (1958), 29-30.

[5] Heinrich Hart, *Gesammelte Werke* (Berlin: Egon Fleischel & Co., 1907), p. 298.

> Mir ist, als hätten wir in dieser Stunde eine ganze Welt von Freud' und Leid durchwandert Hand in Hand. Das versinkt - alles versinkt. Ich bin wieder, der - ich war - nein, der bin ich nicht. (322)

The problem of royalty is, of course, not the central issue in *Teja*. However, certain points are worth making: kingship is clearly portrayed as an extremely demanding task which takes its toll in different ways of Teja. The constant self-sacrifice it requires is exacerbated by the critical danger facing the Goths. Teja, forced by his kingship into an unnatural code of behaviour, demonstrates a corresponding lack of maturity. In other words, the institution of royalty is depicted as being partly responsible for isolating and even injuring the individual by depriving him or her of contact in a meaningful social context.

Johannes (1898)

Royalty as its own sterile and frivolous prison is portrayed in the character of Herodes in the Biblical play *Johannes*. Set in the troubled city of Jerusalem at the time of the coming of the Messiah, the play deals with the ending of an age to make way for a new civilisation and a new system of ethics. Representative of the old age with its materialistic and sensual excesses is Herodes, Tetrarch of Galilee, by the grace of the Roman Empire, profligate and sophisticated cynic in an unsophisticated land. Even his court, colourful, sensual and decadent, stands in vivid contrast to the religious asceticism that rules his people. For Adolf Stern, Herodes' environment provides a "wirksam farbigen Gegensatz zu der düsteren Bussangst"[7] of the Jews.

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[1] Waldemar Kawerau, *Hermann Sudermann. Eine kritische Studie* (Leipzig: B. Elischer Nachfolger, 1897), p. 178.

Sudermann effectively contrasts Herodes with his cosmopolitan manners to the simplicity of the Jewish people. The Jews as portrayed in *Johannes* are a doubly victimized race, economically oppressed by Roman imperialism on the one hand, and spiritually enslaved by priestly authority and religious dogma on the other. In this stifling atmosphere of fanaticism and fear where the slightest deviation from the letter of the law is punished either individually by Zealots or by mob violence, Herodes, himself a Jew, stands out as a wholly alien figure. Ruling only with the help of Rome, he does not possess popular support, nor does he feel the slightest desire to be close to his subjects. Thus he is doubly alienated, first from his faith and secondly from his own race. This isolation is clearly brought out in the first public appearance that Herodes makes. Exasperated by the ominous silence from the crowds, his command to his Roman guards reveals his feelings for his people:

> Was gafft das Volk? (...) Ihr, die ihr mich hüten sollt, nach Roms Befehl, was treibt ihr sie mir -

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[7] Adolf Stern, *Zwölf Jahre Dresdner Schauspielkritik* (Dresden: C.A. Kochs Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1909), p. 124.

nicht aus dem Wege?[8]

The theme of royal decadence is hinted at for the first time in the figure of Herodes. He is portrayed as a weak-willed profligate, bred to admire only Roman tastes and values. As Lorenz puts it, Herodes is :

> ... der entmannte Mann, der seine Kräfte in Empfindungen, Träumen, Genüssen, Nervenreizen erschöpft und nie einer That fähig ist.[9]

He desires the power and prestige of royalty, but not its responsibilities. Herodias, while equally amoral, has far more political acumen and Machiavellian cunning. It is she, for example, who hits upon the scheme of making political concessions to the Temple priests in return for the public blessing of her liaison only to render these promises later invalid by having the same priests executed. Herodes at his most cunning is no match for this cynical ruthlessness.

It is clear that Herodes' isolation is to a great deal self-imposed. He feels no loyalty for his people, whom he regards with contempt. On the other hand, Rome, which he admires, treats him with barely-concealed disdain. Theodor Kappstain, in his analysis of the historical background of this drama, points out that the real Herodes was confronted with a similar situation:

> In Rom war er wohlgelitten; Roms Gunst ging ihm auch über alles. Erlaubte sich jedoch der jüdische König irgend einen Uebergriff, so wurde ihm sofort von höchster Stelle aus sehr unsanft auf die Finger geklopft. Er suchte den Juden ein Jude zu werden und

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[8] Hermann Sudermann, *Johannes*, in *Dramatische Werke*, I (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1923), 36.
[9] Max Lorenz, *Die Litteratur am Jahrhundert-Ende*, p. 193.

> den Heiden ein Heide (...) so prallte doch all' sein Werben um das Volk wirkungslos ab: er war ein Fremdling und dazu ein Tyrann, Edomiter und römischer Kreatur - das verzieh man ihm nicht.[10]

He constantly seeks to impress Rome and its arrogant representatives with his sophistication, as when he feigns ignorance of 'primitive' Jewish rites which he as Tetrarch must perform, thus drawing a clear line between himself and his people. Introducing a courtier to Herodias, he says:

> Und als Gegenstück zu diesem kühlen Schwärmer hier: Jabad, der Levit, mein Licht und mein Gewissen, sobald ich den jüdischen Boden betrete. Denn, beim Bacchus, er weiss in jedem Augenblick, was ich zu tun habe, um nach Art meines frommen Volkes fromm zu sein. (44)

The oath invoking the pagan god, Bacchus, anathema to the monotheistic Jews, is again an affectation, a sign to Rome that he identifies himself heart and soul with Roman culture and civilisation. Even his speech is identical to the light, witty style preferred by the Romans, rather than the earthiness of his people. This driving need to compel Roman respect is the manifestation of Herodes' complex about his own inadequacy, a trait we also recognise in Teja. Like Teja, Herodes frequently compares his lack of success to the reign of his predecessor. Again, he aspires to the fame of his father, primarily because Rome respected his bloodthirsty reign. In his words to Herodias:

> Dem ich nie gleichen werde? ... Was ist der, der im Zorne lieblich lächelt? Ein Feigling? ... Was ist der, der nach zwei Seiten Fratzen schneidet? Ein Treuloser? ... Was ist der, der den Speichel frisst

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[10] Theodor Kappstein, *Johannes der Täufer und seine Zeit* (Berlin: "Harmonie" Verlagsgesellschaft für Literatur und Kunst, 1898), p. 16.

> aus dem Munde der Herrschenden? Ein Knecht? ... Nein ... Denn so tat auch er ... Aber zuzeiten, wenn ihm das Blut die Stirnadern bersten wollte, dann riss er das Schwert aus der Scheide und zerfleischte - Freund und Feind, gleichviel, was ihm den Weg kreuzte ... Bis das Blut seiner Opfer ihm das Angesicht wieder bleich wusch ... Bis den Allmächtigen zu Rom ein Schauder ankam vor solcher Kraft ... Auch mir steigt das Blut in die Schläfen empor ... auch ich will - - aber ich habe kein Schwert ... Und so werd' ich denn weiter lieblich lächeln ... werde weiter Fratzen schneiden nach zweien Seiten und den Speichel der Priester fressen - als der Sohn des Herodes - und sein Affe! (47-48)

A mixture of "Geist und Schwäche",[11] Herodes lacks the essential royal qualities of dedication and a sense of identity with his people. The desire to rule does exist, but it is an expression of his need to wield power. To him his own people are primitive religious fanatics with whom he cannot communicate. Thus we see that this royal figure too is as much a prisoner as any of his oppressed race. Alienated from his role as Rome's graceless puppet and isolated from his own people, Herodes remains a prisoner of his birth and of his role. His sophistication is only a mask for a crucial condition of spiritual and intellectual instability, since neither his kingship nor his racial identity can provide him with a sense of fulfilment. With the coming of the Messiah, Herodes' time is done; representative of a crumbling and decadent age, he, the Tetrarch, has no place in a spiritual kingdom which is based upon new and radically different values.

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[11] Hermann Kienzl, *Dramen der Gegenwart* (Graz: Leuschener & Lubensky's Universitäts-Buchhandlung, 1905), p. 387.

Die drei Reiherfedern (1899)

The themes of royal isolation and alienation which have been noted are also discernible in Sudermann's poetic drama *Die drei Reiherfedern*. Prince Witte is yet another figure who displays an ambivalent combination of character traits. Deposed by his half-brother, he is not enraged by this usurpation. Kingship to him is only a tiresome burden; he feels no identification with his people or with his throne. As Lorenz says:

> Es ist ein rein individuelles Glücksverlangen einer schrankenlos und selbstherrlich angelegten, ruhelosen, von Sehnsucht zerfressenen Natur, wovon Prinz Witte getrieben wird. [...] Er trachtet nicht danach, seinen Thron zurückzugewinnen und sein Volk glücklich zu machen, und so in der Arbeit für andere, in gewissermassen sozialer Pflichterfüllung Genüge zu finden.[12]

On the contrary, he feels free for the first time, and can dedicate himself to his quest: the search for the perfect woman. As a prince, Witte enjoys a high position; but like Teja, he cares little for the privileges that go with his rank. This alienation from his appointed role in life becomes obvious when he is forced again upon a throne, acting as regent for the queen of Samland and her son. As King, he demonstrates no interest in the business of ruling. Witte is also tormented by the knowledge that the throne is not rightfully his and that he merely rules for another. He yearns to be free, to be able to return again to his search. His marriage is to him a luxurious prison and the additional responsibility of kingship drives him to the brink of collapse.

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[12] Max Lorenz, *Die Litteratur am Jahrhundert-Ende*, p. 197.

In Witte's role as king there is no instinct of self-sacrifice or commitment. Unlike Teja, he does not mature in his marriage or in the brief period of his rule; the faults Hans Lorbass sings of remain until the end of his life. In Lorbass' words, ruling is a task only for the strong:

Denn bei jedem grossen Werke,
Dass auf Erden wird vollbracht,
Herrschen soll allein die Stärke,
Herrschen soll allein, wer lacht.
Niemals herrschen soll die Kummer,
Nie, wer zornig überschäumt,
Nie, wer Weiber braucht zum Schlummer,
Und am mindesten, wer träumt.[13]

Witte's inability to see his kingship as anything other than an imposed task effectively imprisons his spirit. His chains are not created by fear, but by love, and for precisely that reason, are almost impossible to break. His anger over ruling for another is only a minor irritant he seizes upon to explain his anguish. Kurt Busse sees part of the problem Witte faces when he says:

> ... Witte hat durch Verrat die Krone erhalten und geht an dieser Lüge zugrunde. Was den König macht, ist der Glaube an sein Recht. Auf ihm beruht sein Gottesgnadentum, ohne ihn helfen ihm weder Erfolg noch Macht noch Liebe und Hingabe der Seinen.[14]

Removing all external factors, we see that the fundamental impetus for Witte's actions remains his total alienation from his royalty. This attitude is symbolized in his joyful destruction of the papers of his administration[15] in order to realize his dream:

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[13] Hermann Sudermann, *Die drei Reiherfedern*, in *Dramatische Werke*, I (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1923), 119.

[14] Kurt Busse, *Hermann Sudermann. Sein Werk und sein Wesen* (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1927), p. 110.

> Wie schaff' ich's nun?
> Dort flackert die Leuchte!
> Und ob ihr schläfrig spielender Schein
> Mich oft in die stürmenden Wälder scheuchte,
> Jetzt lädt sie mich lachend zu sich ein.
> Und drüben - schau, schau! Die Rollen, die
> Schriften,
> Sie, die mir lange das Leben vergiften,
> Jetzt weiss ich, wozu ich sie brauchen kann:
> Aus meines Landes papiernen Sorgen
> Zünd' ich mir so einen neuen Morgen,
> Die neue Sonne zünd' ich mir an! (184)

Witte, like Teja, is a curious blend of generosity and ruthlessness. It is his generosity that compels him to turn aside from his quest to answer a cry for help; it is ruthlessness, however, that causes him to break with his life in Samland. The basic difference between Witte and Teja lies in the recognition of responsibility, social and personal. Teja, while bitterly resenting the inexorable demands of kingship, still finds reserves of strength to fulfil his thankless task. He derives his endurance from his racial identity, an advantage denied to Herodes and Witte. It is as a mature human being that he goes to his death and thus his end awakens compassion and a sense of identification.

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[15] Gimmerthal, on the other hand, interprets the entire play as a symbolic representation of Sudermann's turbulent life and this incident in particular as his reaction to the critical reception of his works. (Armin Gimmerthal, *Hinter der Maske*. [Berlin: C.A. Schwetschke und Sohn, 1901], p. 99).

Witte, on the other hand, recognizes neither duty nor racial pride in his heritage and only comes to the awareness of his folly when it is too late. His fate arouses little sympathy since the power of his personality lies not in the acceptance of responsibility, but in the boundlessly egoistic pursuit of a dream in preference to the boredom of reality. As he says to Hans Lorbass:

> Ich aber zieh', mit Missmut schwerbeladen,
> Des armgewordnen Lebens schnurgeraden
> Spazierweg schnurgerad hinab,
> Mit Pflichten wie mit Gräbern eingezäunt -
> Und in der Ferne schon mein eigen Grab.
> Doch säss' in meinem Halse noch ein Schrei,
> Ich schrie': Errette mich vom Alltag, Freund! (181)

Witte's mistake is ultimately that of being human; because of his drive for perfection and his rejection of whatever he believes comes between him and his goal, he must suffer, as humanity suffers, in its permanent consciousness of imperfection. He cannot come to terms with his royalty because he cannot come to terms with life itself; for him, a chimera of perfection is preferable to the uncomfortable knowledge that to be human involves the fulfilment of certain responsibilities towards the human race. Like Herodes, Witte is a "krasser Individualist"[16] who will always put himself first. The play ends, as it begins, with the grim figure of Hans Lorbass, determined to rule in Witte's place and bring order to his neglected land. Personal grief on his part must give way to royal duty:

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[16] Hans Jürgensen, *Henrik Ibsens Einfluss auf Hermann Sudermann*, Diss. Lausanne (Heilbronn a.N.: Otto Weber, Verlagsdruckerei, 1903), p. 80.

> ... Dort drüben gibt's ein verlottertes Land,
> Das braucht ein' rächende, rettende Hand,
> Das braucht Gewalttat, das braucht ein Recht; -
> Zum Herrn - werde der Knecht! (231)

Prince Witte thus fits the pattern of Sudermann royalty. His isolation, his bitterness and his rejection of the demands made upon him are all features he has in common with Teja and Herodes. Royalty is again not depicted as a glamorous existence, but as a life of unceasing stress and tension.

Es lebe das Leben (1902)

For the first time, the themes of royal isolation and decadence are openly discussed in Hermann Sudermann's play *Es lebe das Leben*, set in aristocratic Berlin society at the turn of the century. Among the Conservatives portrayed here is Prince Usingen, a leading light of the Party. In this *Raisonneur* figure we see the problems faced by royalty in modern times.

Usingen is very much the party *enfant terrible*, who constantly satirizes every principle held most sacred by his political allies. For Sigismund Friedmann, he is:

> ... ein recht gelungener Typus eines alten blasierten und mit Nietzscheschen Brocken herumwerfenden Aristokraten ... [17]

Though completely dedicated to the Party himself, he scandalizes his more humourless fellow politicians by his flippancy about the problems of the party. But in spite of this lack of identification with the aims of the aristocracy, he still feels it his duty to preserve as long as possible its privileges against the attacks of more progressive factions, attacks he ironically refers to as modern entertainment. In his words to Beate:

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[17] Sigismund Friedmann, *Das deutsche Drama des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts in seinen Hauptvertretern*, I (Leipzig: Hermann Seemann Nachfolger, 1902), 382.

> Ich bitte Sie, Gräfin, die Revolution gehört nun einmal zu den Genüssen des modernen Menschen. Und auf den Parlamentarismus zu schimpfen, ist unsere Art, Revolution zu machen. Lassen Sie uns doch dies harmlose Vergnügen.[18]

Usingen clearly recognizes the basic conflict in Prussian society, which is a battle between a class which controls political power and the classes which demand more power. His commitment to an obviously short-lived social structure is thus one of loyalty, and not conviction. To Beate he points out:

> Sehen Sie, Gräfin, die Geste, mit der der heutige Staat seinen Bürgern gegenübersteht, sieht so aus: Zeigefinger und Daumen in der rechten Westentasche. Die Geste des Bürgers dagegen: die in der Hosentasche geballte Faust. Und nur in dem Augenblicke entsteht das nötige Gleichgewicht, in welchem die geballte Faust sich öffnet, um das aus der Westentasche entwickelte Trinkgeld entgegenzunehmen. Die Fundamente eines solchen Gebäudes hoch einzuschätzen, das ist Geschmackssache. (21)

Sudermann thus portrays Usingen and his fellow aristocrats as putting up a tenacious battle to maintain their position in a world grown increasingly impatient with a social arrogance that cannot be backed up with a corresponding level of economic power. As Friedmann says:

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[18] Hermann Sudermann, *Es lebe das Leben*, in *Dramatische Werke*, V (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1923), 20-21.

> Eben dieses tragische Bewusstsein, dass die handelnden Personen *Morituri* seien, giebt dem Drama seine Eigenartigkeit. Aus dem Kampfe, den diese Klasse um ihr Dasein führt, schöpft sie neue Kraft. Es ist der besondere Charakter des Adels unserer Zeit, der sich wieder erhebt und von der Ruheseligkeit befreit hat, in welcher der epikuräische Adel vor der Revolution sein Genüge fand ...''

Usingen's alienation, not only from the political system he defends, but also from the views of many fellow Conservatives, is borne out by the appearance of the Junker von Berkelwitz-Grünhof. A clear parody of the reactionary politician, von Berkelwitz-Grünhof's opinions are so right-wing as to appear naively ridiculous.

The contrast between Usingen and Grünhof emphasizes the intellectual gulf that separates the former from many of his colleagues. He recognizes only too clearly their lack of education and polish, their arrogance and political immaturity. For the reactionary elements of Usingen's party, the Prussian State is the exclusive preserve of the Prussian nobility; its resources must serve the needs of the aristocracy first and foremost. As von Berkelwitz-Grünhof points out:

> ... Wozu sind wir denn der preussische Adel, wenn der Staat nich für uns sorgen soll? (38)

Usingen's sarcastic answer is, as he is well aware, lost upon the Junker:

''Sigismund Friedmann, *Das deutsche Drama des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts in seinen Hauptvertretern*, p. 382.

> Das sollten Sie lieber im Reichstag Herrn Liebknecht oder Eugen Richter fragen. Das würde Sensation machen ... (38-39)

The theme of actual physical decay in royalty is touched upon here for the first time. As Usingen himself points out, his family has been isolated from new stock and forced into systematic inbreeding which, in his case, has resulted in obvious damage:

> Meine Ahnen haben sich schon zur Zeit Ludwigs des Frommen höchst ungebührlich benommen. Und nu sehn Sie mich mal an, mich trauriges Überbleibsel. Kiefern prognath, - Stirnbogen asymmetrisch - Satyrohren - sämtliche Zeichen des Verfalls. Da muss ich nun - dank einer höchst standesgemässen Inzucht - als Trottel durch die Welt laufen, und ich versichere Sie, ich habe nicht das mindeste Talent dazu. Wenn ich mit einer gesunden Kuhmagd Kinder zeugen dürfte! (42-43)

Thus from the consciousness of isolation comes the cynical detachment of this "Mephistopheles des aristokratischen Salons".[20] There is no support for him even in religion, since he sees it as a tool the Conservatives use to justify the existing social order:

> Für uns gibt es nur eine Logik. Die heisst Selbsterhaltung. Nehmen Sie die Gottgewolltheit von uns, und wir sind - Hampelmänner. (114)

Therefore in the final analysis, we see that Usingen is less a politician convinced of his principles than an aristocrat determined to fight for the privileges of his class to the last. His intellectual isolation within the party corresponds to a similar isolation within his royal caste which in its turn has led to physical degeneracy.

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[20] Gustav Wethly, *Dramen der Gegenwart* (Strassburg i. Els. : Ludolf Beust Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1903), p. 111.

Though *Es lebe das Leben* is not one of Sudermann's stronger efforts, being what Charles Harris describes as "a tissue of improbabilities",[21] it shows the first real signs of the author's concern with the theme of social isolation by virtue of royal blood, leading to frivolity and even decay.

Sturmgeselle Sokrates (1903)

In Sudermann's comedy *Sturmgeselle Sokrates* there are several references to royalty, all of which bear out the themes of frivolity and decadence. Set in a small provincial East Prussian town, the play deals with a group of 1848 revolutionaries united in their dislike of the monarchy and the servility it inspires.[22] Thus the effect of the royal visit to this town allows Sudermann to satirize the various reactions this class inspires in the citizens from the righteous indignation of the "Sturmgesellen" to the servility of those struggling for patronage to the delight of those intoxicated by the glamour of royalty. The radical views of the "Sturmgesellen" are unconsciously repeated by the innkeeper Makroscky when he criticizes the visit of the two princes:

> Na, die Prinzen - die auf die Jagd jehenden, Elche schiessenden Prinzen! Seine Allerhöchste Königliche Hoheit und Seine Allerhöchste Königliche Hoheit mit allerhöchst dero königlicher Bejleitung und

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[21] Charles Harris, "Sudermann's New Play", *The Nation*, 74 (1902), 70.
[22] Karl Knortz, *Sudermanns Dramen* (Halle a.S.: Richard Mühlmann's Verlag, 1908), p. 67.

allerhöchsten königlichen Jagdhunden.[23]

The constant repetition of these titles is heavily sarcastic and attacks the ostentatious lifestyle of German royalty, surrounded as it is by a multitude of courtiers, all of whom must be supported at the taxpayers' expense. The view of royalty expressed by the anti-monarchist "Sturmgesellen" is, surprisingly enough, echoed by the pillar of the establishment and the nemesis of the group, the Landrat von Grabowski. Although a senior civil servant, he is at the princes' beck and call and must accept their whims with good grace. His life is a continous attempt to rectify problems caused by royal arrogance and frivolity:

> Und dann, wissen Se, diese ewigen Schererereien! Zum Kotzen, sag' ich Ihnen! ... Was mir schon die hohen Herren zusetzen, wenn sie nach Iberhorst fahren, Elche schiessen! ... Einmal hatten sie einen Wagen voll Pelze mitgebracht. Da war's heiss geworden, - hatten sie die Pelze irgendwo abgeschmissen ... Landrat, such de Pelze! .. Ich mit Gendarmen und Ortsvorstehern und Gemeindeboten - ganze Armee, sag' ich Ihnen - auf de Pelzjagd jegangen ... Was war der Lohn? Pelze hatten Regen gekriegt, und ich kriegt' meinen Rüffel ... Is das nu ein Leben? ... (165)

It is significant that the people who are most affected by the charisma of royalty are types like the waitress Ida or the immature corps-student Reinhold. Through Reinhold's naive rhetoric we see the absurdity of such monarchist fervour:

> Und durch die deutschen Waffen ist der Glanz der alten Hohenstaufen doch wieder auf uns herabgestiegen, und die Raben brauchen nicht mehr um die Kyffhäuser zu fliegen. Darum müssen wir doch in

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[23] Hermann Sudermann, *Der Sturmgeselle Sokrates*, in *Dramatische Werke*, II (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1923), 116.

> deutscher Treue stehen zum Thron und zu unserer siegreichen Armee - - (195)

And Hartmeyer's tearful reaction to the royal order of merit he receives proves how powerful the appeal of royalty is, even to the most unsusceptible of people.

The two princes in *Sturmgeselle Sokrates* never make a direct appearance; their presence, however, is constantly felt and motivates every change in the plot, resulting eventually in the disintegration of the "Sturmgesellen". Their characters are described by von Grabowski in less than flattering terms. According to him, the princes are frivolous and capricious in the extreme. They are careless with their own property and have no qualms about commandeering the services of public servants who must neglect their proper duties in order to cater to royal whims. The incident of the furs, coupled with the Landrat's desperate hunt for a dentist who can cure a royal pet, demonstrate not only the problems of Prussian servility towards those in power but also the manner in which the arrogance of royalty isolates it even from its adherents.

Ida, the yielding waitress, prides herself on a trousseau with embroidered crowns, like that of a princess; Höftke struggles for the privilege of royal patronage; Reinhold basks in the reflected glory of the Hohenzollerns, who personify for him German unity and honour; but the Landrat, who is closest of all to royalty, knows only too well the rude reality that makes his life so difficult. For him, there can be no glamour or fulfilment in serving royalty; his career is too vulnerable to princely capriciousness.

Die ferne Prinzessin (1907)

This one-act play again revolves around a royal visit. The Princess Marie Luise von Geldern pays a surprise visit to a small inn in a provincial town. Sudermann has his characters constantly discussing the princess before her actual arrival and every word deliberately heightens the effect of exotic royal glamour, power and mystery. When she finally appears, we see that she is the total opposite of the fairytale princess one expects; on the contrary, she is a shy, sickly creature who possesses far less presence than her authoritative lady-in-waiting. It soon becomes apparent that there is nothing remotely glamorous about the life this princess leads. A patient, melancholy woman, she is bred to a sense of duty that must substitute for the human warmth and freedom lacking in her world. Court etiquette and her own illness deprive her of the most simple pleasures; her every action is controlled, lovingly but firmly, by her lady-in-waiting, who in the same fashion shelters her from any unofficial encounter with those people not of her circle.

The consuming loneliness of royalty is the main theme of this play. Frau von Brook's domination is symbolic of the way in which the princess's life always has been decided for her, even to the point of a loveless match for reasons of state. Her entire life will thus be spent in court, always on display, the prisoner of her birth. In no other play does Sudermann illustrate so successfully the isolation of royalty and its lack of freedom. Princess van Geldern will never know the luxury of spontaneous speech or action; even in the informal exchanges between princess and lady-in-waiting, both follow a strict code that prescribes that anything royalty does is by its own specific command, whereas in reality it is Frau von Brook who decides the princess's daily schedule.

The conversation between the princess and the unsuspecting student Strübel is more than a meeting between ruler and subject. It demonstrates the psychological gulf that separates the two, even with the utmost cordiality on both sides. Every nuance of this dialogue is designed to emphasize the contrast between Strübel's robust enjoyment of life and Marie Luise's melancholy passivity. Strübel's idea of a princess is a lofty vision beyond all mundane worries; Marie Luise herself knows only too well the wintry reality of her strictly circumscribed life. Her secret ambition, compared to that of Strübel's, is pathetic in its simplicity. She confides to him her secret dream of being:

> "... ein stilles, friedvolles Weib, das ein kleines, verschwiegenes Glück hütete wie seinen Augapfel, das von der Welt nichts sähe, als was es sehen will, und das die Kraft hätte, zu wählen, wen es ihr beliebt."[24]

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[24] Hermann Sudermann, *Die ferne Prinzessin*, in *Dramatische Werke*, II (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche

This is a personal vision of freedom that she will never realise.

Thus the portrayal of royalty in this play brings out clearly Sudermann's view of this social elite, condemned to live forever apart, always obeying the call of duty and never really free.

Die Lobgesänge des Claudian (1914)

In this play we are treated to a similar description of the isolation and physical traits exhibited by royalty. The emphasis on actual physical damage increases in Sudermann's later works, e.g. the figure of the Emperor Honorius. Portrayed as the degenerate ruler of a decadent empire, he leads a life so isolated that he reacts with fear to the presence of strangers (a character trait we also see to a lesser degree in Marie Luise). Sudermann spares no device to underline Honorius' decadence. The general Stilicho, in order to strengthen his authority over this feeble-minded boy, has arranged a marriage between his daughter and the Emperor; however, Honorius is impotent and regards his child-bride with ill-concealed distaste. This absence of virility, stamina and robust health are all recurring signs of royal degeneracy in Sudermann's works.

Life at the Roman court is also portrayed as actual torment, inflicting serious psychological damage. The young

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[24] (cont'd)Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1923), 509.

Empress appears as constantly surrounded by eunuchs and stony-faced matrons of honour who frown on the slightest sign of spontaneous feeling. This environment drives her to mental collapse and eventually to her death.

The classic irony of a man of Stilicho's stature dedicated to preserving this parasitical ruler and his crumbling empire is heightened by Sudermann's only introducing Honorius in the second act. Using the same technique as in the play *Die ferne Prinzessin*, Sudermann shows the contrast between the awe engendered by the very mention of the Emperor's name and the reality of this feeble-minded puppet. The crowning irony is Claudian's song of praise dedicated to an Emperor he, like many others, has only seen from a distance. The song refers to the Emperor's strength and virility, and describes in detail his superhuman courage and smiling confidence. After these stirring verses, the sight of this "Jünglingsgestalt, blass, blutlos,"[25] playing with his poultry, serves to drive home the impression of a decay that is almost tangible. Claudian's glorious Emperor is revealed as nothing more than a "kindlicher Trottel."[26]

Honorius personifies the degeneration of royalty in the ethical sphere as well. It is this loss of moral values that causes his betrayal of Stilicho, which in its turn, leads to the destruction of Rome. Sudermann contrasts the decadence of the Roman court to the splendour of Alarich, the Goth king. In him we see the Germanic values of honour and loyalty fused in a single harmonious personality. Unlike Honorius, he instinctively obeys the impulses that he and Stilicho share as part of their Germanic heritage, instincts that are a mystery to Romans like Claudian. In Alarich, with his courage and dedication to his people, we see Sudermann's positive concept of royalty and the justification for its existence.

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[25] Hermann Sudermann, *Die Lobgesänge des Claudian*, in *Dramatische Werke*, I (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1923), 408.

[26] Theodor Kappstein, *Sudermann und seine besten 17 Bühnenwerke* (Berlin: Franz Schneider Verlag, 1922), p. 131.

On the other hand, Honorius is doomed; fearful and degenerate, he represents not only the price paid by those who are born royal in terms of common humanity but also the end of a dissolute age, which must make way for vigorous Germanic warrior stock. Its time is done; the age has come of the powerful warrior-kings who will re-introduce the values that once made Rome great.

Der tolle Professor (1926)

The figure of Prince Aribert in Sudermann's novel *Der tolle Professor* bears striking resemblance to that of Princess Marie Luise, physically and emotionally. Quiet, diffident and sickly, he hires the petty bourgeois Sieburth at first to tutor him,and later to accompany him on secret expeditions into the lower levels of society in a short-lived search for pleasure and freedom.

The prince is depicted as unhappy in spite of his high position. Friendless, he is surrounded at court only by intriguers and parasites who constantly spy on him. Through his escapades (always incognito) he attempts to escape the restrictions set about him. Human needs and impulses must be stifled for fear of watching eyes at court; those of royal blood are always subjected to the most minute scrutiny, thus preventing any frank and free development of the personality.

Aribert, like Marie Luise, aspires to the liberty of speech and action that the average citizen takes for granted. Like her as well, he is resigned to his lot, incapable of asserting himself. His pleasures must therefore always be experienced, ironically enough, in the role of the common citizen, rare moments of privacy and freedom in the life of a prince. Isolation, emotional sterility and physical decay are the themes repeated here. Even physically, Aribert is a pathetic specimen, doomed to an early death:

> In dem Kolleg bei Zeller sass öfters neben ihm ein unscheinbarer, wenn auch gut gekleideter junger Mann, mit blassem, sommersprossigem Milchgesicht und glatt zurückgestrichenem Blondhaar, anzusehen wie ein krankes Meerschweinchen, hüstelnd und schweratmig, recht eigentlich zum Sterben geboren.[27]

This combination of anemia (a favourite motif) an unprepossing appearance and superficial elegance is significant; we need only compare the commoner Sieburth with his robust virility and strength to this scion of royalty, who is quite ill-equipped to deal with the rigors of life. Indeed, Sudermann stresses this contrast in pointing out that it is Sieburth who is immensely successful with women, whereas the insignificant Aribert sinks into oblivion.

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[27] Hermann Sudermann, *Der tolle Professor* (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1926), p. 79.

Die Frau des Steffen Tromholt (1927)

Sudermann's novel deals with yet another royal figure - the Princess Elisabeth, a bird-like, icily arrogant woman, whose mother once corresponded with the painter Steffen Tromholt. Elisabeth, like Aribert or Marie Luise, also leads a life hedged about with spies and constantly under observation. However, she is a far stronger figure. Where in fact the other two characters have more or less resigned themselves to leading lonely lives based upon strict etiquette, Elisabeth is well aware of the restrictions set upon her, but is perfectly capable of avoiding them, using deceit when necessary.

Steffen Tromholt, accustomed as a successful painter to deference from women, finds to his astonishment that it is Elisabeth who is the dominant figure in their relationship. This independence is partly due to her natural arrogance, but mostly to her obsession with the need to maintain her image of royal respectability. Her sole concern is the need to avoid the slightest breath of scandal as a royal personage. For the first time, Steffen is placed in the uncomfortable role of the supplicant; Elisabeth makes him aware, with light cruelty, of his advanced age, his inferior social position and, worst of all, his increasing obscurity.

The emphasis in this novel is upon the aura of emotional sterility that Elisabeth radiates and which is reflected in her brief descriptions of the nobility at court. Through her eyes we see them as decadent in private but strictly respectable in public. Even her own marriage has not been consummated due to her husband's lack of interest in women. Elisabeth realises only too well the problems of her life-style, but at the same time she desires the privileges that go with it; luxury and the awareness of social superiority more than compensate her for the lack of genuine love and human warmth. As she says to Steffen:

> ... Denn das Leben, das ich nun einmal führe, hat mit unserer Gemeinsamkeit gar nichts zu tun ... Dies ist für mich etwas Abseitiges, ein Hafen, ein Schlupfwinkel, in den ich mich flüchten kann, wenn die Geschichte mir drüben zu bunt wird ... Aber was da drüben nun einmal ist, gehört mir allein. Da darfst du mir nicht 'reingucken. Du würdest es auch gar nicht verstehen. Das ist eine Welt für sich, wie auch die deine es ist.[28]

The cold egoism Elisabeth represents is reflected in the manner in which she initiates the affair with Tromholt, an affair which, as we see, soon loses all but the most conventional signs of affection, being reduced on her side to a refuge and a purely physical outlet for her sexually repressed existence. It is significant that Elisabeth dislikes kissing, a fundamental act of physical sharing, and which thus involves a demand for true feeling on her part. She has no concept of love and cannot understand Steffen's complaint that she does not love him.

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[28] Hermann Sudermann, *Die Frau des Steffen Tromholt*, (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1927), p. 275.

The figure of Princess Elisabeth represents Sudermann's bleak view of contemporary royalty and its arid life-style. Her emotional immaturity is even reflected in her physical appearance, which is that of a very young girl, almost androgynous in its narrow boyishness. The empty life she leads is a direct cause of her superficiality; Steffen describes her life as "starved", but Elisabeth, having no terms of reference, cannot comprehend the vastness of the loss implicit in these words. Characters like Usingen, Marie Luise and Aribert recognize the indignity of the restrictions placed upon them by their royal rank. Their acceptance of the situation has a certain fatalistic dignity to it; Elisabeth, on the other hand, is too shallow to feel the damage to her individuality. She is content to lead a life based upon deception and emotional sterility which in its turn prevents her from having a meaningful relationship.

In summing up, we see that in certain cases, the author appears to nurse an idealistic view of the actual task of kingship, if not of royalty itself. It is significant that the few positive figures he portrays may, like Marie Luise, resent the demands made upon them by their rank, but their sense of duty to their people is unswerving. In *Die*

Lobgesänge des Claudian, Alarich, who is depicted as honourable, courageous and beloved by his people, is favourably contrasted to the decadence of Honorius. Rulers like Teja represent an ideal of self-sacrifice and dedication to their task, combined with a lack of arrogance which permits their people to approach them without servility. Therefore it appears that Sudermann's portrayal of the ideal ruler is based partly upon the Germanic tradition of warrior-kings ruling solely by the will of their people and their own unimpeachable integrity. Such kingship is depicted as an extremely arduous burden, to be assumed only by those morally and physically fit for the heavy responsibility.

In most cases, however, royal figures appear emotionally drained or actually damaged by their role in society. Where royalty is portrayed as glamorous, we see that this splendour is only a mask that conceals extreme frivolity or actual decadence. In most cases, it is clear that the strain of maintaining such a role places the individual under great stress and eventually eliminates most of the natural and spontaneous instincts of humanity. There is no freedom at this level, only the dictates of duty and the ever-present necessity of maintaining a façade of royal dignity. In extreme cases, this strain leads to a decrease in stamina and an effete dynasty or to increased frivolity and arrogance, which is aggravated by the servility that royalty frequently inspires. Along with these negative aspects come egoism and emotional immaturity that are rooted in the constant emphasis upon the elite nature of royalty. Any rebellion against the lack of freedom and privacy is depicted as hopeless from the start.

Thus we see that Sudermann's portrayal of royal figures tends to be basically negative. Their royalty is nearly always shown as reducing, not enhancing their personalities. It is a curious fact that in Sudermann's works little fault is attached to these characters for their deficiencies; he appears to indicate that the blame belongs to a society which sets royalty apart from the normal world, condemning it to an arid, extremely ritualistic life-style that is deleterious to a natural psychological development. Several of the figures portrayed are potentially remarkable individuals who have, however, been reduced to a narcissistic existence by the lack of outlets for their talents.

This analysis indicates that Sudermann maintains a rather ambivalent attitude to the royal types in his works. Though the negative traits in these figures by far outweigh the positive ones, there is a clear tendency to see them as victims of a particularly inimical environment which is thus responsible for any social and psychological aberrations.

B. POLITICIANS AND ADMINISTRATORS

The type of aristocratic politician and administrator that appears in Sudermann's works seems to be primarily a conventional one. None of the characters portrayed demonstrate liberal tendencies or belong to any left-wing parties. Even those types whose clarity of perception permits them to be objective about their class are loyal supporters of the Conservative faction. Baron von Röcknitz (*Das Glück im Winkel*) and Ulrich von Kletzingk (*Es War*) are exceptions to the rule of absolute solidarity, the former because he despises the comparative passivity of his colleagues and the latter because he cannot identify with their snobbery. Though a dedicated member of the Conservative ruling party, he regards with distaste the attitude of his peers that rejects the lower and middle-classes as somehow inferior: In his dry words to Leo:

> ... du weisst ja, solange ich auf dem Buckel der Liberalen mein Stroh dreschen und beweisen kann, dass der Mensch erst beim Baron anfängt, ist für mein Glück gesorgt.[29]

This allegiance seems to be motivated by an instinctive loyalty to their embattled class and a determination to protect its diminishing privileges.

The type of intellectual aristocratic liberal politician is wholly absent in Sudermann's works. Only Ulrich von Kletzingk (*Es War*), Richard von Völkerlingk and Prince Usingen (*Es lebe das Leben*) are of actual intellectual calibre; the others are conventional types who generally regard politics as a tedious duty to be performed in order to preserve the State from the attacks of Social Democrats and left-wing demagogues.

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[29] Hermann Sudermann, *Es War*, in *Romane und Novellen*, III (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1930), 18.

THE MAJOR CHARACTERS

1. von Krotkeim (*Der Katzensteg*, 1889)
2. Ulrich von Kletzingk (*Es War*, 1894)
3. Alfred von Röcknitz (*Das Glück im Winkel*, 1896)
4. Michael von Kellingshausen (*Es lebe das Leben*, 1902)
5. Richard von Völkerlingk (*Es lebe das Leben*)
6. Ludwig von Völkerlingk (*Es lebe das Leben*)
7. Baron Brachtmann (*Es lebe das Leben*)
8. von Berkelwitz-Grünhof (*Es lebe das Leben*)
9. Prince Usingen (*Es lebe das Leben*)
10. von Grabowski (*Sturmgeselle Sokrates*, 1903)
11. Dr. Albers (*Opfer*, 1921)

Es lebe das Leben (1902)

Sudermann's depiction of the views of the politicians here is on the whole a remarkably tolerant one. He chooses to portray even their bigotry with understanding rather than bitterness, and his characterisation is enlivened by gentle humour. These politicians are not shown as exploiters or tyrants; their conservatism stems, not from the desire to oppress, but rather from the honest belief that they, the aristocracy, are the sole ones qualified to lead the State as it should be done. Sudermann's politicians see themselves as the protectors of an entire nation and a social order by virtue of their birth; it is thus no coincidence that he frequently portrays them upon the defensive. Their mission to them is sacred, and men like Ludwig von Völkerlingk actually find Usingen's flippancy about the State unbecoming to his rank:

> Ohne mir einen Vorwurf zu erlauben - ich meine, Durchlaucht sollten die Fundamente des Staates, zu dessen Hüter Sie von Geburt und Partei wegen berufen sind, ein wenig höher einschätzen. (21)

These aristocratic politicians are in deadly earnest when it comes to Party affairs; for them, birth in the aristocracy is equivalent to automatic inclusion in the ranks of the Conservatives. Their devotion to the honour of the Party is unswerving. Von Kellingshausen cannot fight a duel since it would damage the reputation of the Party and Richard von Völkerlingk chooses to deliver an eloquent speech in the Reichstag about the sanctity of marriage although his conscience forbids it, partly because the Party would suffer in event of his refusal.

The view of the State, the masses and the aristocracy itself as expressed by these politicians only varies in its degree of conservatism, from Usingen's sardonic description of the State, on the retreat from its own frustrated and increasingly aggressive citizens to the hilariously reactionary opinions of von Berkelwitz-Grünhof. They realise that the people are becoming restive, but even enlightened politicians like Richard von Völkerlingk are depicted as insisting upon the sanctity of aristocratic privilege. As he says to his son:

> ... Wir haben uns aus den Zeiten des Faustrechts und der Ordalien allerhand Nebengesetze herübergerettet, die unserem alterprobten Herrenbewusstsein und unserem Persönlichkeitsdrang entsprechen. Und gleichviel, ob die anderen Stände sie verdammen oder - wie der höhere Bürgerstand es tut - sich ihnen zu assimilieren suchen, für das Blut, das in *unseren* Adern rollt, sind sie ein Segen. Mit ihnen werden wir leben oder untergehen. (58)

Such a claim to aristocratic privilege rests, according to Völkerlingk, upon the two gifts that lend the nobleman his special status: his cavalier attitude to death and, linked with it, his code of honour, by which he is bound to live. Physical courage and the readiness to lay down one's life for one's honour entitle the aristocrat to certain prerogatives in society; the other classes, which do not abide by this rigorous self-discipline, would not understand such a code of behaviour nor would they be able to exercise such privileges with responsibility or confidence.

Sudermann portrays the general attitude of these politicians regarding the people as one of disdain combined with resignation. The *Dreiklassenwahlrecht* system introduced earlier on[30] forces them to campaign for votes, compelling them into undignified encounters with the lower classes that sensitive souls like Richard von Völkerlingk shrink from.

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[30] Günther Grünthal, *Parlamentarismus in Preussen 1848/1849-1857/1858* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1982), pp. 66ff.

Even robust Junkers like Michael von Kellingshausen, who feel it the aristocrat's duty and honour to represent his district, have only contempt for the so-called masses:

> Mir ist ja sauwohl, dass ich den janzen Reichstagsschwindel los bin. Erbarmen, is das ein Schwindel! ... Unlängst nach einer Wahlversammlung sag' ich zu einem Bauer: "Sie, lieber Freund" - um die Wahlzeit sind das alles liebe Freunde. Manchmal hat übrigens so'n Biest die Frechheit und sagt auch: 'lieber Freund.' Das jiebt dann eine grosse Verbrüderung sämtlicher Bevölkerungen. - "Sie, lieber Freund," sag' ich, "werden Sie nu unserem Kandidaten die Stimme geben?" "Wat wird er mir jäben?" sagt er. "Wat wird der Freisinnige Ihnen jäben?" sag' ich. "Der Freisinnige schimpft," sagt er, "und wer schimpft, der amesiert mir." Recht hat der Mann. Amüsieren müssen wir die Plebs, dann liebt sie uns ... Zirkus reiten, meine Herren. Dazu ist der Kavalier noch gut ... (47)

Elections are a disagreeable task that offends the aristocrat's sense of dignity. Exhausting campaigns, tasteless situations and the general feeling of being exposed to ridicule all take their toll. As Richard says bitterly:

> ... Schliesslich ist irgend ein Trapezkünstler ein König gegen unsereins. Er hat sein Kunststück gemacht. Sein Erfolg ist sein Recht ... Ach, diese letzten vierzehn Tage! Hätten Sie mich gesehn von Dorf zu Dorf karren wie ein Zahnreisser! ... Freiheit und warme Worte. Freibier und warme Würstchen. Dazu noch mein früherer Sekretär als Agitator gegen mich ... Grauenvoll. (29)

Sudermann depicts these aristocrats as dedicated to maintaining the supremacy of the Party. Even Usingen, in spite of all his cool objectivity, is considered the most inflexible politician of all in terms of loyalty, if not intellectual attitudes. The Party is sacred; nothing is permitted to touch its honour. The leadership is described as determined to ensure that the members behave with the utmost discretion in public. A scandal must be avoided at all costs, as is seen in the reaction of the Conservatives to Kellinghausen's plan to sue the left-wing Meixner. In this context, Sudermann tends to portray his aristocratic politicians as constantly on the defensive against the attacks of left-wing parties like the Social Democrats which they regard with distaste and sometimes actual revulsion, such as von Berkelwitz-Grünhof's reaction upon seeing a Socialist "rag" in the Kellingshausen household. Graf Sewitz (*Heilige Zeit*) is the only aristocrat in Sudermann's works, with the exception of Udo von Hecklingen (*Notruf*), who admits to having attended left-wing meetings as a more or less objective observer.

Thus we see that these Conservatives, under attack on the point of aristocrat power monopolies, must justify their predominant position by asserting their complete respectability. They frequently point out that the social stability and the moral health of the State depend upon maintaining the status quo. As Baron Brachtmann says:

> ... Dass wir als die Hüter einer gesunden Ordnung dastehen, das, glaub' ich, genügt schon zu unserer inneren Legitimation. Die Formen, selbst der Gehalt dieser Ordnung mögen dem Wechsel unterworfen sein, so weit will ich unseren Gegnern entgegenkommen, wenn nur der Endzweck stets der gleiche bleibt: der Gesamtheit das ethische Gleichgewicht zu sichern. (114)

Thus we see that Sudermann's portrayal of the aristocratic politician tends to conform to the type of the dedicated Conservative, although depicted with tolerance and even understanding for this ideological position and these values. This objectivity does not, however, conceal the fact that these politicians hold on with gritty determination to valuable privileges and, in spite of all their public protestations of virtue, rule mainly for their own benefit. As Beate says to Richard von Völkerlingk:

> ... Nenne dich nicht in einem Atem mit den Andern. Du denkst an Pflichten, sie an Rechte. Weil dir die Masse dienen soll, willst du auch ihr dienen. Jene wollen nichts als herrschen. (33)

Thus the general impression created by these figures is that of a class on the retreat, conscious of living on borrowed time, yet tenaciously defending its already vulnerable position.

The administrators in Sudermann's works also reflect this deep conservatism. They are generally portrayed as self-serving, ruthless mouthpieces for semi-feudal regimes, intent upon furthering their careers at all costs.

Von Grabowski (*Sturmgeselle Sokrates*), for example, appears as a crafty, genial character with a Machiavellian sense of humour. His career is all-important and he is quite unscrupulous in his methods of dealing with any opposition. Integrity and principles are of lesser value in his world, which is divided into the kind of people who vote for the Conservatives and the kind who resist him. Any trace of conformity is enough for von Grabowski. He is, for example, reluctant to discharge the alcoholic local veterinarian because the man "wählt gut." (165)

The administrator in Sudermann's *Katzensteg* (1889) lacks the cunning and humour that make von Grabowski such an arresting character; he appears as a vain, spiteful man, corrupted by fame into a petty bureaucrat, incapable of carrying out his duties without prejudice. In the same way, the local administrator in the play *Opfer* (1921), Dr. Albers, is shown as a mouthpiece for the senseless orders of the imperial war government. While slightly more sympathetically portrayed than von Krotkeim, he nevertheless appears as a hypocrite who orders people arrested for black-market activities while himself being involved on its fringes.

On the whole, these politicians and administrators, whatever their doubts about the social system they represent, act as figures who have dedicated their lives to preserving the social order at all costs. Sudermann's characterization is a mildly humorous one, lacking any extreme ideological or political bias. These figures are not portrayed as truly tyrannical, however right-wing their beliefs might be. Most of them believe whole-heartedly that the system they defend is the only one that ensures the moral and social balances of the State. It is clear therefore that Sudermann's depiction of the aristocratic politician or administrator demonstrates his understanding of their beliefs and behaviour patterns while at the same time showing clearly the faults in the social order they regard as sacred.

C. THE OFFICERS

Sudermann's portrayal of German aristocrats who choose the army as a career appears to be an overwhelmingly conventional one, belonging to a long tradition of works that deal with the exclusive, claustrophobic world of the army, such as Hartleben's *Rosenmontag*, Schnitzler's *Liebelei* and *Leutnant Gustl*, or even Fontane's *Schach von Wuthenow*. All but two of the officers in this category are extremely conventional, ranging from the arrogant complacency of General von Klebs (*Heimat*) to the cynical lassitude of Freiherr von Stückrath (*Herbst*). Certain concepts do not vary; these officers all accept the existence of a code of honour that governs every facet of their public and private lives. A certain arid humourlessness and arrogance afflict them in a lifestyle that Sudermann tends to portray as endlessly frivolous and claustrophobic. Only Walter von Prell (*Das hohe Lied*) is a bright, independent figure, but his career ends in scandal.

There are no *Raisonneur* types or intellectuals in this group. The prevailing attitude appears to be one of unquestioning obedience to prevailing social norms and official institutions of authority. Von Mertzbach (*Das hohe Lied*) is one of the few who risk some censure by his impulsive marriage to Lili Czepanek; since, however, he retires to his private estates at once, the danger of ostracism that he actually faces is nil.

In this category of army officers, we see that there is a clear distinction in Sudermann's depiction of the older generation of officers and the younger set. The distinction here rests in the extreme degree of rigid conservatism displayed by the older officers.

THE SENIOR OFFICERS

In Sudermann's works, the type of middle-aged or retired army man is almost invariably portrayed as bigoted and inflexible in matters of honour or convention. While they may be genial, even affectionate family men, they display little understanding or compassion. They live by an Army code that allows nothing to conflict with its definition of honour and it is this implacability and its harmful effects that the author appears to concentrate upon in his depiction of these characters.

THE MAJOR CHARACTERS

1. General von Klebs (*Heimat*, 1893)
2. von Lanski (*Fritzchen*, 1896)
3. von Yburg (*Margot*, 1907)
4. E. von Mertzbach (*Das hohe Lied*, 1908)
5. von Hecklingen (*Notruf*, 1921)

Heimat (1893)

General von Klebs, who puts in a brief appearance in the controversial play *Heimat*, is an excellent example of the older generation of aristocratic army officers. Sudermann's portrayal of this jovial, supremely self-assured bigot is an accurate forewarning of the stifling provincialism that Magda must face when she returns home.

Inflexible authoritarianism is von Klebs' watchword. He unhesitatingly rejects people and areas of experience that lie outside the sphere of the army. The only career that he considers meaningful for a man is that of an officer, and in his own words, the only people he wishes to socialize with are soldiers. In matters of decorum he is extremely demanding, and expects the deference which is his due as a general. The military pervades every fibre of his being; even his language reveals his army background, being liberally sprinkled with military jargon in every context, however inappropriate. When referring to a card party, for example, he says to Marie: "Na, liebes Fräulein Mariechen, alles klar zum Gefecht?"[31]

In accordance with his inflexible views on society, he considers opera singers and similar artistes not fit company for the higher social circles. Speaking about the famous singer dall' Orto's presence at the town music festival, he says:

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[31] Hermann Sudermann, *Heimat*, in *Dramatische Werke*, IV (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1923), 263.

> So, so! Na, was wär' denn, wenn die nicht wäre? Ich dächte, wenigstens unsre streng gesitteten Kreise halten sich so - nen - sone Sache vom Halse. (263-264)

The General does not even see the necessity for a music festival; his answer to the professor's retort that one must cherish the cultural heritage of the nation is brusque:

> Wer die idealen Güter der Nation pflegen will, der kann ja einem Kriegerverein beitreten. (264)

According to him, culture is purely a waste of time, something with which no self-respecting man should concern himself:

> ... Ich aber sage Ihnen: die Kunst ist eine Erfindung, die sich die Drückeberger zurecht gemacht haben, um im Staate zu etlicher Bedeutung zu gelangen ... (264)

The general's indignation upon seeing Pastor Heffterdingk in the crowd gathered to watch the famous opera singer is perfectly genuine; he feels that the pastor should not display interest in matters outside his field. Religion for this older set of aristocratic officers is a military duty much like any other, involving total submission to a higher authority and brooking no deviation from the rules of conformity. This attitude is echoed by Schwartze (who has married into the aristocracy) when he says:

> Und was uns hier betrifft, lieber Gott! so geb' ich eben diese schwachen und nutzlosen Arme dazu her, die groben Arbeiten zu verrichten. Das ist alles. Schliesslich liegt es ja auch nah, dass ein alter Soldat das bisschen Mark, das ihm der Thron übrig gelassen hat, dem Altar zur Verfügung stellt. - Denn - e - das gehört doch zusammen - nicht wahr? (258)

The rigidity of von Klebs' views is echoed by all but one of the other officers in this category. This inflexibility, even ruthlessness, is especially evident in the matter of personal and family honour. It is a patriarchal, almost barbaric concept of honour that Sudermann portrays here. To wipe out an insult, a duel must be fought, whatever the subsequent scandal or disgrace to the family. Their black-and-white, totally inexorable sense of right and wrong permits no mercy, no compromise and no compassion for those wronged. Any insult offered to a member of the family automatically becomes a personal injury which must be immediately avenged. A disgrace suffered or perpetrated by one member of the family is, in the eyes of these officers, transferred to all the others. Schwartze, for example, rejects Max's desire to marry his daughter Marie since he feels that Magda's shame has contaminated the entire family. In this concept of honour there are no grey areas, no excuses and no compassion for the immature or injured. As he says to Max:

> Du willst also - den Rock unsres Regiments - den willst du an den Nagel hängen und in Zivil 'rumlappen? - Na, da können wir ja zusammen einen Spielsalon aufmachen, oder wir werfen uns auf Güterausschlachten ... Daneben so'n bisschen Lebensversicherung, Agent, Kommissionär - was weiss ich ... du mit deinem schönen adligen Namen treibst die Opfer zu - und ich rupfe. Hä - hä - hä ... Nein, mein Jungchen, selbst wenn du noch wolltest, ich will nicht ... Dies Haus mit allem, was drin sitzt, ist zu Grunde gerichtet. Drum geh deiner Wege ... Mit der Schwartzeschen Sippschaft hast du nichts zu schaffen. (335)

The rejection of any alternative careers as unbecoming for a soldier, combined with the rigidity that destroys innocent and guilty alike, are character traits that the older generation of aristocratic officers have in common. This intrinsic ruthlessness is also hinted at in the one-act play *Margot*. The story is that of the daughter of an old army officer who has been seduced by a trusted family friend. This betrayal has been kept secret from Margot's father, in order to protect her from his automatic reaction, which would without doubt destroy her and the whole family. As Frau von Yburg says to Ebeling, the family lawyer:

> Und nun plötzlich: das Grauenvolle! - Nein, das werd' ich nie verstehen! - Ach, und alles allein zu tragen! O ja, das müsst' ich ... Mein Mann als alter Offizier hätte ihn sofort vor die Pistole geholt, und damit wären wir natürlich *alle* zu Grunde gerichtet worden. Margots Leben - unsere ganze Stellung in der Gesellschaft - alles![32]

Another example is that of von Mertzbach (*Das hohe Lied*), who attempts to kill his wife and her lover, considering it not murder, but his right as an officer to avenge his honour. Von Lanski in the play *Fritzchen* delivers a far deadlier insult; he publicly horsewhips the young lieutenant he discovers with his wife, thus effectively destroying him as an officer and as a man.

Of the older generation of officers, only von Hecklingen (*Notruf*) receives a moderately positive treatment, while the others appear as unbending and intolerant bigots. As a man of integrity and honour, von Hecklingen finds himself in a post-war Germany that scoffs at such bourgeois values. In spite of his conservatism, he does not live in the past, but adapts to the new age without compromising his principles. The only act that recalls the tyrannical patriarchal authority of the other officers in this group is his threat to disinherit his son if Udo refuses to join his father's Freikorps set up to maintain civil order in the city. It is significant, however, that Udo does not take this threat seriously and only joins the Freikorps for personal reasons.

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[32] Hermann Sudermann, *Margot*, in *Dramatische Werke*, III (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1923), 434.

This surprisingly uniform treatment of the older aristocratic officers is repeated in the group of young military men in Sudermann's works.

THE JUNIOR OFFICERS

Immaturity and naive idealism are the common character traits in this type of army officer. Sudermann portrays these figures as leading lives without intrinsic value, accepting the prejudices of their society without question. Even the slightly older officers, e.g. von Stückrath (*Herbst*), are lacking in the maturity required to make independent judgements or maintain meaningful relationships. Snobbery is taken for granted by these young officers and applied frequently, sometimes with pleasure and sometimes with a dry matter-of-factness which the other classes seem to take for granted. The only acceptable intercourse with the working classes (besides casual affairs) is with family servants. This snobbery extends itself to the rejection of any other career, however promising, as below one's dignity.

None of these young men question their empty life-style with its trivial social pursuits and its uncompromising code of behaviour. There are parallels in this portrayal to the type of young army officer in other contemporary works, such as Schnitzler's *Leutnant Gustl*, whose life is empty of any real meaning, or the frivolous young men of *Rosenmontag*. This system does not alienate them in the slightest by its lack of intellectual fulfilment. They demonstrate little interest in culture, politics, etc., enjoying rather a life of drinking, gambling and flirtations, enlivened by the occasional duel to the death. Not surprisingly, there are no *Raisonneur* figures in this group and no intellectuals at all.

Conventionality, even banality, rule the lives of these men. Their relationship with the opposite sex reflects their strict social attitudes. Women, in their opinion, are divided into two groups upon the basis of rank. Those of equal or higher birth are treated with exaggerated respect as the incarnations of purity and high-mindedness. What attracts Boleslav (*Der Katzensteg*) to Helene, the pastor's daughter, is not her integrity, but rather her decorum and her resemblance to the Virgin Mary, even though her behaviour is repellant in its "stiff, self-conscious prudery and Pharisaic posing."[33]

> Dies Angesicht erinnerte ihn an ein altes Altarbild

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[33] Frank Miller, "Sudermann and his Weltanschauung", *The Bookman*, 23 (1906), 646.

> in Dome, darstellend die Jungfrau Maria in einem schönen Garten voll steifer Lilien und kurzgestielter Purpurrosen.[34]

In several cases these officers are attracted to older married women, wives of senior officers, flirtations that are hardly discouraged. They are without exception depicted as bachelors; Niebeldingk (*Herbst*) is the only one who has a standing relationship with a woman of his own rank, but this too ends in disaster. Women of lower birth are not only regarded as fair game, but quarry that must be hunted according to certain rules. Flirtations and mistresses are acceptable, even necessary for these young officers to acquire an image of dashing virility; innocents like Fritz von Drosse (*Fritzchen*) are actually refused permission to marry and settle down until they have experienced this aspect of army life. Marriage with women of lower rank is never considered seriously since the immaturity of these officers precludes any defiance on their part towards the prejudices of society. Only Bernhard Raschoff (*Die Raschoffs*) thinks of leaving his wife for the cheerful, ruthless Wally, but he too is eventually dissuaded from this course of action. As his father says:

> ... Solche Weiber sind dazu da, dass man sie nimmt und wegwirft, aber nicht, dass man in Hörigkeit verfällt.[35]

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[34] Hermann Sudermann, *Der Katzensteg*, in *Romane und Novellen*, II (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1930), 28.

[35] Hermann Sudermann, *Die Raschoffs*, in *Dramatische Werke*, II (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger,1923), 240.

The casual liaisons are conducted with discretion, and the women in question are treated, in some cases with a certain affection, in others with tired contempt. An example is von Stückrath (*Herbst*), who knows that his mistress is being unfaithful, but is too cynical to protest or become incensed over this betrayal.

Sudermann's exact sense of how flexible society is in such matters comes to light in the short story, *Die indische Lilie*. In this ironic portrait of the sexual mores of Wilhelminian Berlin, we see that in affairs involving potential scandal, both parties and their duly appointed representatives appear to conform to the rules of an invisible game in which the moves and counter-moves are known in advance, such as the exchange of formal letters demanding redress, the first visit by a relative, the subsequent tests of nerve and patience, the threats on both sides, etc. This is depicted in satirical detail down to the almost automatic responses of the people involved, all subconsciously aware of the fundamental tastelessness and tedium of the entire situation.

Thus we see that the relationship of these young officers to women is generally quite unsatisfactory, since their affections are based upon youthful inexperience or idealism. Even the lives of older men like Niebeldingk or von Stückrath are empty of warmth, due to their steady refusal to accept any emotional commitment. They are doomed to continue their bleak lives since they too lack the personal initiative to break free of their self-imposed loneliness. In their lives, as regular and precisely organized as a parade-ground drill, there is no longer any leeway for spontaneity, the loving word or the unguarded gesture.

On the whole, the officers of the younger generation as depicted by Sudermann lack the single-minded ferocity displayed by their elders where honour is concerned. Their concept of honour revolves less around the inviolability of the family than around their own personal standards of behaviour, which may be quite arbitrary. Scandal means less to these young bloods than it does to their elders; it is the older von Drosse (*Fritzchen*), for example, who rages at his son for disgracing the family. Again, Lothar (*Jolanthes Hochzeit*) cares little that he is deceiving his best friend, and thus by any standards, dishonouring himself; his passion for Iolanthe is so strong that he is beyond reasoned thought.

However, it is a curious fact that none of these young officers is portrayed as actually vicious or degenerate; Sudermann focusses their characters against the background of a society that not only condones, but actively encourages their follies, all of which are due to the inexperience of youth.

THE MAJOR CHARACTERS

1. Boleslav von Schranden (*Der Katzensteg*, 1889)
2. Lothar (*Jolanthes Hochzeit*, 1892)
3. Max von Wendlowski (*Heimat*, 1893)
4. Fritz von Drosse (*Fritzchen*, 1896)
5. von Hallerpfort (*Fritzchen*)
6. Graf Sperner (*Das Blumenboot*, 1905)
7. Leutnant von Wolters (*Der letzte Besuch*, 1907)
8. Walter von Prell (*Das hohe Lied*, 1908)
9. Herr von Niebeldingk (*Die indische Lilie*, 1911)
10. Freiherr von Stückrath (*Herbst*, 1911)
11. Prinz Max von Barenburg (*Heilige Zeit*, 1921)
12. Paul von Neubecker (*Der Hüter der Schwelle*, 1921)
13. The von Ockhardt brothers (*Der Hasenfellhändler*, 1925)

Fritzchen (1896)

An excellent example of this category of army officers is the character of Fritzchen in the one-act play of the same name, part of the trilogy titled *Morituri*. This young officer is portrayed as an amiable, cossetted boy, an adored only son and the pride of his parents. Even his physical appearance and his name reinforce the general impression of youth and immaturity. He is described as a

> "Muttersöhnchen, schlank, zart, sehr jugendlich, blondes, bis auf die Stoppeln geschnittenes Haar, krauses Schnurrbärtchen ... Fahriges Wesen".[34]

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[34] Hermann Sudermann, *Fritzchen*, in *Dramatische Werke*, III (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung

In love with his cousin Agnes, he requests his father for permission to marry. His father, himself an almost legendary ex-army officer, advises him to first gain some experience of life and women before deciding to settle down. As he reminds Fritzchen later:

> Aber deine einundzwanzig Jahre und - ach, du lieber Gott! ... Du trugst deine Eierschalen noch höchst fidel auf dem Rücken mit dir 'rum - wie die Infanterie den Tornister. Von dem, was sich so "Weiber" nennt, hattest du nicht die leiseste Ahnung - Kellnerinnen und so'n Volk rechn' ich natürlich nicht ... Ich sagte dir also: "Mein Junge, lass diese Unterredung begraben sein - vor allen Dingen auch gegen Agnes ... Mach's, wie's dein Vater und dein Grossvater gemacht haben! Erlebe was - und dann komm wieder." Erinnerst du dich nicht denn? (344-345)

The boy, impulsive and idealistic, takes this advice only too literally. His infatuation with the wife of a senior officer and the subsequent disaster build the content of the play.

The action is set in the brief hours that Fritz spends at home before the decision of the tribunal, hoping that he may be granted an honorable death. It is difficult to see how Knortz may assume that the outcome of the duel is unclear.[37] Sudermann makes it plain that, whatever the decision of the honour tribunal, Fritz is determined to die. After his public humiliation, another life abroad or another career (both perfectly possible for a wealthy young man) seem to him only shameful escape routes for an officer. As Eugen Zabel points out:

> Sudermann erkennt den ehernen Zwang an, in dem sich

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[36] (cont'd)Nachfolger, 1923), 339.
[37] Karl Knortz, *Sudermanns Dramen*, p. 30.

> der Offizier befindet, wenn er seine verletzte Ehre wiederherstellen will. Ein neues Leben anzufangen, ist ihm fast zur Unmöglichkeit gemacht.[38]

Fritz's rejection stems not only from the realisation that his existence has become meaningless, but also from an aristocratic and military disdain for any other way of life:

> Ja, wenn wir schon bei *der* letzten Hoffnung angelangt sind, dann sieht es schlimm um uns aus, Vater ... Soll ich etwa in Chicago eine Schnapsbude aufmachen oder einen Viehhandel mit dem väterlichen Kapitel? Ja? - Würd'st du es getan haben? (350)

A similar inability or reluctance to leave the army and strike out on one's own may be seen in *Rosenmontag* or in Fontane's *Irrungen, Wirrungen*. The officers here are bred to this army life and are lost without its rigid code of values.

Stripped of his self-respect and honour, Fritz has lost quite effectively the will to live. When Friedrich Spielhagen points out that his death is unnecessary, he supports, in his own fashion, the author's contention that the influence of the military code is inescapable, and never more so than under such circumstances.[39] When his father attempts to persuade Fritz to at least try to survive the duel, his bitter outburst proves that he cannot reject the values of the army code that he lives by:

> Ich will nicht, Vater! Und wenn du das Schauspiel gesehen hätt'st, das die Wartensteiner gestern

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[38] Eugen Zabel, *Zur Modernen Dramaturgie. Studien und Kritiken über das deutsche Theater*, 2nd. ed. (Oldenburg und Leipzig: Schulzesche Hof-Buchhandlung und Hof-Buchdruckerei, 1903), p. 147.

[39] Friedrich Spielhagen, *Neue Beiträge zur Theorie und Technik der Epik und Dramatik* (Leipzig: Verlag von L. Staackmann, 1898), pp. 356-358.

> gesehn haben, (*schaudert*) dann würd'st du für mich vom Leben auch nichts weiter mehr verlangen als 'nen halbwegs anständigen Tod ... (349)

In the matter of guilt and responsibility, Sudermann, the moralist, is quite specific. Richard von Drosse is partly responsible for the catastrophe by his well-meant but disastrous advice. However, the aristocratic military elite society that breeds men like him is equally at fault. By creating a system of values and rigid attitudes, it warps the most basic instincts of humanity. The love of a parent for an only child, the sole hope of the dynasty, cannot prevail against this wall of tradition that teaches the belief that a man's life is worthless in the event of personal humiliation. Ironically, it is the elder Drosse himself who seals his son's fate by admitting that he himself could not make a fresh start under such conditions.

The ability to break free of the army, the initiative to strike out afresh in a new country, the adaptability needed to begin a different career, are all lacking in Fritzchen, who sees in his disgrace the inevitable end of his life because it implies the end of society's good opinion of him. Though neither father nor son lack courage, their obedience to the army code has deprived them of the intellectual independence required to view the entire affair in its correct perspective.

At every point in this play, we perceive the invisible world of the army and its bleak influence upon the two Drosses, e.g. their military jargon, their habits, and most important, their unconscious suppression of natural instincts and emotions. Any sign of feeling on Fritz's part is cut off abruptly by his father's command to demonstrate the self-control that befits an officer. When, for example, Frau von Drosse mentions an injury supposedly suffered by her son, Fritz's answer is gently ironic:

> Vater hat Recht ... Der Soldat *darf* ja keinen Schmerz aüssern ... *Hat* auch keinen Schmerz ... So was kommt nicht vor ... (342)

In *Fritzchen*, Sudermann contrasts the sphere of the family, warm, loving and full of promise to that of the army which looms, invisible yet ominous, in the background. The military code of behaviour here is depicted as quite inflexible, even towards the natural mistakes of youth and inexperience. Neither Fritz nor his father reject the system that rules their lives; on the contrary, the effect of the play is heightened by their complete acceptance of its values, an acceptance that climaxes in the joyous embrace of father and son upon hearing that the duel which will end Fritz von Drosse's life has been permitted.

Other young officers in this category are frequently portrayed as humourless, and naively idealistic. Boleslav von Schranden (*Der Katzensteg*), for example, only acquires maturity through his struggle to expunge family dishonour. Before this transformation, however, he appears as idealistic and intolerant in the extreme. It is only by virtue of his constant battle with the rebellious Schrandeners that he gradually realises the complexity of human relationships in society, thus learning to treasure his own fragile individuality against the threat of the herd instinct. A similar type is von Wolters (*Der letzte Besuch*) whose entire demeanour is that of the upright, loyal comrade-in-arms, grieving over his friend's death in a duel. Certain themes in *Fritzchen* are repeated here, such as the insistence upon strict self-control, the attraction of young officers for the wife of a senior, the subsequent realisation of the essential shallowness of the lady in question, and the recognition, too late, of true love for another. Pedantic, courteous and honourable, von Wolters displays rather more maturity than his peers in this group, but his striking naivety in respect to women is a character trait that he has in common with them.

Taken as a whole, both generations of army officers as portrayed by Sudermann display no signs of alienation from their given role in society. They are depicted as an elite who enjoy life in the army and can conceive of no other career. Secure in their unquestioning acceptance of military values, and rejecting any trace of intellectual non-conformity, they move through life with casual arrogance, firmly rooted in a military society that condones the patriarchal ferocity of the older generation and encourages the immature follies of the younger. The influence of the army in this category is always tangible. It is typical of Sudermann that his criticism is directed less against the officers he depicts than against the tight-knit, claustrophobic fortress of Army life. In this hermetic and conformist society, cut off from freedom and innovation, prejudices and misconceptions appear grossly magnified into a system of unwritten laws which govern every moment of an officer's life.

D. THE LADIES OF THE REGIMENT

In Sudermann's portrayal of Army officers and Army life, we see how the codes followed by these men also affect the women similarly. Thus wherever the ladies of the regiment appear, they almost invariably display the same prejudices and attitudes of their menfolk. In this small group of women who are or have been married to regular Army officers, we perceive an extremely rigid attitude towards society. Out of nine such women, only three, Frau von Lanski, the anonymous countess and Agnes von Hecklingen, are rather less than rigidly conventional in thought and action.

Of these three characters, Agnes von Hecklingen (*Notruf*) is basically traditional in remaining true to her marriage vows; what sets her aside is a gift for introspection and a neurotic sensitivity. Her dangerous flirtation with thoughts of suicide reflect the spiritual anarchy of the post-war period in Germany, a time of crumbling moral and social values. The characters of Frau von Lanski and the unknown countess exhibit certain similarities as well. Both women are married, but engage in affairs with young Army officers, which result in scandal and death. In the figure of Frau von Lanski (*Fritzchen*), constructed from the passing references of Fritz's family (she herself never appears on stage), Sudermann describes a woman, no longer young, but still beautiful, unhappily married to a harsh husband, who finds herself attracted to an obviously infatuated Fritz. While her contribution to the tragedy cannot be denied, Sudermann also makes it plain that she is an unhappy and lonely woman, finding no fulfilment in her marriage and little companionship among the other women in her circle, who resent her beauty.

On the other hand, the countess in the play *Der letzte Besuch*, is a classic example of a femme fatale, who enjoys the attentions of young officers while assuming airs of virtue in public. Also no longer young, but extremely beautiful, she displays a marked resemblance to the narcissistic shallowness of Julia (*Die Lichtbänder*) or Juliane Rother (*Die Freundin*). Living in the enclosed, overwhelmingly masculine world of the Army, she revels in the attention she receives and pays no heed to the destruction she causes. There is some justification for Frau von Lanski's actions; but there is none for the countess's amorality. Sudermann's dramatic technique is revealed in the manner in which he gradually strips away her mask of romantic melancholy to display the raw egoism below. At every point we see how she skilfully manipulates susceptible men like von Wolters to achieve her goals, e.g. by portraying herself as the epitome of chastity, in no way responsible for the beauty that leads men to persecute her with their attentions. Sudermann employs again his favourite technique of contrast to demonstrate the difference between Daisy, the horse-trainer's daughter, and the countess; the one sophisticated and amoral, the other reticent and dignified, with a natural integrity that is above such machinations as the countess has been guilty of. Thus it is the aristocrat with her social snobbery who appears as ill-bred and vulgar, while Daisy displays a self-discipline that is genuinely noble.

The other officers' wives in this category are alike in their bred-in-the-bone conservatism, believing firmly in the sanctity of the social order, which for them consists solely of the Imperial court, the Army and the aristocracy. Only those individuals belonging to "good" families are acceptable; Jews, artists, the petty bourgeoisie are not. The lives of these women centre around the family, the Church and charitable activities. They are extremely conscious of rank and are inveterate snobs. They have no interest in culture or intellectual pursuits of any kind, except upon a very superficial level. Sudermann portrays their lives as arid wastelands in which there is no room for warmth, humour or intellectual independence.

THE MAJOR CHARACTERS

1. Generalin von Klebs (*Heimat*, 1893)
2. Frau von Drosse (*Fritzchen*, 1896)
3. Frau von Lanski (*Fritzchen*)
4. The Countess (*Der letzte Besuch*, 1907)
5. Frau von Yburg (*Margot*, 1907)
6. Frau von Storch (*Notruf*, 1921)
7. Frau von Weidrich (*Notruf*)
8. Frau von Köstlin (*Notruf*)
9. Frau von Hecklingen (*Notruf*)

Heimat (1893)

A classic example of a pre-war Army officer's wife is that of Generalin von Klebs, who appears as the leader of the local Christian charity. The female equivalent of her husband, she is thoroughly conscious of her senior rank, and, while not unfriendly, firmly exacts the dignities due to her position, such as the right to enter and leave a room first, the place of honour upon the sofa, her correct title, etc. Her meeting with Magda is more than just a meeting of artist and army wife; in it we perceive the crucial confrontation between the old and the new generation, the one stately and condescending, the other bored, exasperated and openly contemptuous of outdated attitudes. Landsberg points out that two worlds are contrasted in this meeting:

> Die alte konservative Zeit und die Gährung der neuen, die konventionelle Sittlichkeit der Provinz

> und die freiere Lebensanschauung der Grosstadt, der traditionelle Kastengeist des frommen Militärs und der freiheitliche Lebensdrang einer Künstler-Persönlichkeit.[40]

Generalin von Klebs' entire attitude is a calm but firm rejection of any new or different ideas and this trait, more than anything else, emphasizes the gulf between her and Magda. When Magda points out, for example, that all a person really needs to be fulfilled is a career, the Generalin's reaction is that of a woman, who by virtue of her unassailable social position, is above such anarchical ideas:

> Mein Gott, wir stehn ja hier diesen Ideen ziemlich fern, mein liebes Fräulein. Es kommt ja von Zeit zu Zeit eine Dame Vorträge halten, aber die guten Familien machen sich damit nichts zu schaffen. (312)

Invariably, these ladies are almost helpless when confronted with new and different situations that require flexibility of response. Thus the initial curiosity they feel upon meeting the famous dall' Orto very soon becomes alarm and even "spürbare Antipathie."[41] A life of total obedience to convention has robbed them of much of their sensitivity.

Margot (1907)

The shock felt by army wives upon encountering any new or radically different situation is reflected in Frau von

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[40] Hans Landsberg, *Hermann Sudermann*, p. 51.

[41] E.H. Bleich, *Der Bote aus der Fremde als formbedingender Kompositionsfaktor im Drama des deutschen Naturalismus.* (Berlin: Triltsch & Huther, 1936), p. 108.

Yburg's reaction to the news of her daughter's seduction by a family friend. Portrayed again as deeply traditional and pious, she has the wit to conceal it from her husband, but not the sensitivity required to understand or communicate with the child she loves. As she says to Ebeling:

> ... Sehen Sie, ganz weiss bin ich geworden! ... Und ich versteh' es auch immer noch nicht! Ich sehe das Mädchen immer noch an wie ein fremdes, rätselhaftes Wesen, das sich zufällig zu mir verirrt hat. Ich - so strenge erzogen, so behütet mein Leben lang, von allem Formlosen, Ungesellschaftlichen so himmelweit ferngehalten ... Und *sie* doch übrigens auch ... Nein, da hab' ich mir nicht den leisesten Vorwurf zu machen. (434)

Being so bereft of original thought, she makes no attempt to fathom Margot's suffering, but instead directs all her energies towards arranging a marriage between her and the man in question. The fact that this person is a notorious rake and that the marriage would be a bizarre travesty means less to her than the knowledge that Margot has been rehabilitated. A severely restricted perspective on life is a character trait that Frau von Yburg has in common with the other types in this category. Her strict conventionality does not permit her to understand Margot's revulsion and self-contempt. At no point is she depicted as an unkind or unpleasant character; like the Generalin, she is only a limited creature, her attitudes and responses moulded into rigid patterns by the military caste she belongs to.

Notruf (1921)

The theme of a clash between the established elite of army wives and a new generation is repeated in Sudermann's trilogy of plays dealing with the war and the anarchy in Germany following the defeat in 1918. Several army women appear here; except for Agnes von Hecklingen, they are all widows, cast upon their own resources in the economic disaster of those times. *Notruf*, the last play in the trilogy, depicts only too clearly the tragic helplessness and isolation of these women in a modern society they do not understand and in which they are ill-equipped for survival.

Familiar traits are revealed in their meeting at Agnes' house, such as snobbery and social condescension, the insistence upon the privileges of rank, the rejection of change, etc. The speech of these women is markedly more forthright than in older works such as *Heimat*, a change which corresponds logically to the time interval and the suffering inflicted by World War I. However, we see that the basic situation has changed not at all. The lady with seniority still receives the place of honour, changes in German society are lamented and the loss of an Imperial Court mourned. Frau von Storch, for example, attacks the newly installed democratic government, refers to the people as "Kanaille" and makes antisemitic remarks about the effect of ennobled Jews on a pre-war court:

> Ich weiss, ich weiss: es war nicht immer die *beste* Gesellschaft bei Hofe. Es gab viel zu viel geadelte

Jüdinnen, die sich da 'rumtrieben.[42]

A realistic touch, and one that emphasizes the ingrained snobbery of these women, is Frau von Storch's cutting remark about the new status of Frau Ebert, the Chancellor's wife:

> ... Denken Sie doch, diese ehemalige Budikersfrau lässt sich von Bruno Paul ein Schlafgemach zeichnen. Und wenn sie ihren hohen Gemahl in Weimar besucht, dann muss ihr die Eisenbahnverwaltung einen Salonwagen stellen. Das ist die erlauchte Frau ihrer Vergangenheit schuldig! ... (275)

In Sudermann's unsparing portrayal, it is clear that Army women like Frau von Storch are still living in the past, when their elite status and financial security were assured. They cannot and will not come to terms with a Germany that is modernizing itself at a furious rate. Accustomed from birth to privilege, authority and the protection of their menfolk, they are hopelessly adrift in the age of the brash proletariat and the nouveau riche.

Contrasted to their isolation is the vigorous spirit of women like Susi and the Countess Melitta, who represent the new age. They welcome their new responsibilities and revel in their freedom to live and work as they please. Their rejection of the pre-war society is total. Melitta, herself of the aristocracy that Frau von Storch admires so much, dismisses any thought of living in the past:

> Es wird mir schwer genug fallen, zu den früheren Verhältnissen zurückzukehren. Wenn da überhaupt noch was übrig ist. Im Zoo sah ich einmal einen ganz kahl

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[42] Hermann Sudermann, *Notruf*, in *Dramatische Werke*, VI (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1923), 108.

> gewordenen alten Geier. Dem waren sogar die Schwungfedern ausgebissen. Und nun sass er fauchend am Boden und lauerte auf die Fetzen Fleisch, die die andern ihm weggenommen hatten und gelegentlich wieder fallen liessen. So kommt heut unser Adel mir vor. Drum rette sich, wer kann. (278-279)

There is no more tolerance in the modern world for the ladies of the regiment. Raised to accept without question the values of a military society that appeared eternal and all-powerful to them, they cannot adapt to this new age that rejects their pretentions as outdated. There is undoubtedly a certain justice in Sudermann's portrayal of these women, so severely handicapped by their upbringing, but there is very little sympathy, unlike his treatment of royalty, politicians or the Junker type.

E. THE JUNKERS

Sudermann's technique in the field of the drama and the novel is especially striking in his portrayal of the tough East Prussian country nobility of his homeland. His factual accuracy and obvious affection for this type is ascribed by Kawerau to Sudermann's deep and abiding love for his native province and its people:

> In fast allen seinen Geschichten bewegt er sich auf dem heimatlichen Boden, in dem die starken Wurzeln seiner Kraft ruhen und mit dessen Bewohnern er vertraut ist wie Einer, mit den ostelbischen Junkern zumal, denen er noch weit schärfer in Herz und Hirn gesehen hat, als beispielsweise Spielhagen den Edelleuten im pommerschen Plattland; diese derben, vollblütigen, kraftstrotzenden Männergestalten kommen denn auch bei ihm mit einer Lebendigkeit und Lebenswahrheit heraus, dass, wer sie einmal kennen

gelernt, sie sobald nicht wieder vergessen kann.[43]

It is in the group of Junkers that Sudermann manages to create his most striking characters. Frederic Cooper's statement that Sudermann nurtured "a smouldering antagonism"[44] towards the Junker class does not stand up under close scrutiny. On the contrary, these jovial, robust figures are typical examples of what Fedor Mamroth despairingly described as the popular glorification of the Junker. Referring to the character of Röcknitz (*Das Glück im Winkel*), Mamroth says:

> Aber sein Wesen ist derartig, dass wir niederknieen und die Götter bitten möchten, sie sollten uns doch endlich einen Dichter senden, wenn möglich einen aus unserem lieben deutschen Süden, der das Ostpreussentum von der Bühne wegfegt und uns von der Verherrlichung des Junkertums befreit.[45]

Sudermann's Junker types are proud, successful *Herrenmenschen*, who in their raw vitality seem far more realistic than the country nobility of Fontane. In Kurt Busse's words:

> Sehr viel echter als Fontane diese Adligen in seinen Romanen gezeichnet hat, stellen sie sich hier in Sudermanns Werk vor uns hin. Fontane war kein streng realistischer Gestalter. Seine märkischen Adligen haben alle den Fontaneschen Zug eines etwas spielerischen Zweifels an sich und der Welt, einer Resignation, die sich klug als Weltweisheit gibt. Er nahm ihnen die starken und gewöhnlichen Züge, die diese Junker zeichnen, die Selbstsicherheit, Überheblichkeit bei aller ungezwungenen Vertraulichkeit im Umgang mit dem Volk; Herrscherwillen und Herrschergabe; Enge des -

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[43] Waldemar Kawerau, *Hermann Sudermann. Eine kritische Studie*, p. 78.

[44] Frederic Cooper, "The Creation of Types and some Recent Novels," *The Bookman*, 24 (1906-1907), 117.

[45] Fedor Mamroth, *Aus der Frankfurter Theaterchronik* (1889-1907) I (Berlin: Egon Fleischel & Co., 1908), 230.

> Standesbewusstseins, des Weltblicks; Rücksichtslosigkeit im politischen Kampf. Gewiss blieb auch bei den Fontaneschens manches, was ihnen zugehört: Mut, Ritterlichkeit, Stolz, aber es kennzeichnet sie nicht persönlich. Sie werden unter Fontanes Händen zu Adligen, ungefähr wie ein Bürger sie sich denkt: geistig überlegen, vornehm, etwas blasiert, unfähig zum Geldverdienen, gut aussehend und mit eleganten Umgangsformen, königstreu, verbeamtet. Die heutige Wirklichkeit zeigt sie doch zumeist recht anders. Da steht im Mittelpunkt ihres Daseins nicht das Amt, Stand, Staatsgesinnung, sondern der Besitz.‘‘

In the entire category of aristocrats, over 50 (out of 150) belong to the category of the country nobility, indicating a definite emphasis in Sudermann's works upon this type. A general survey also indicates several common character traits in this group, united by their profession of ex-officers and gentlemen farmers. Out of around twenty-five main figures, all but three of the Junker men are related figures, loyal to their class, and holding rigidly traditional views on life. These men are overwhelmingly depicted as positive, being rough but jovial, extremely forthright (even crude) and with a sentimental streak.

Almost none may be considered intellectually gifted; the others are generally portrayed as lacking interest in anything except their estates, horseflesh and women. Farming is their true passion, and not a dilettante occupation; they are excellent, ambitious farmers and ruthlessly efficient businessmen. Sometimes, this efficiency may be concealed by an urbane manner, but this trait is rare, e.g. Baron von

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‘‘Kurt Busse, *Hermann Sudermann. Sein Werk und sein Wesen*, pp. 83-84.

Stolt (*Es War*). Only a few appear as polished or cosmopolitan types; Sudermann depicts the majority of his Junker men as Teutonic to the core, rooted in the soil of their particular province.

The Junker's relationship with his family tends to be patriarchal, brooking no resistance or dissent. They maintain all the traditions; their daughters are raised to be good housewives and marry young while the sons frequently become officers while waiting to come into their inheritance. Especially wives and daughters are treated with a rough, hectoring manner which only imperfectly conceals a protective love (expressed in the frequent use of pet names).

The Junkers' relationship with their servants and the local peasants is depicted as semi-feudal but unmistakably rooted in a deep mutual loyalty. Brusqueness, even abuse, is freely mixed with affection and the responsibility of the landlord to care for his people is taken seriously. The attitude of these peasants and retainers to their masters is usually one of dour devotion, but never servility. They have no fear of their landlords and thus do not forfeit their self-respect through this loyalty. Except for brief references in *Der Katzensteg* (1889) and *Der tolle Professor* (1926), there is little hint of socio-economic exploitation in Sudermann's works dealing with the Junkers. The link between master and man appears rather as a social contract based upon the common devotion of both to the welfare of the estate. For Fritz Gause, this unusual perspective originates not in Sudermann's ignorance of oppression and poverty, but rather in his recognition and acceptance of many positive facets of the contemporary social structure without any ideological bias:

> Der gesellschaftliche Aufbau kannte wie überall so auch in Ostpreussen ein Oben und Unten; er war gegliedert wie jeder soziale Organismus, geschichtet in Herrschaft und Dienst, und nur wer von marxistischer Ideologie angesteckt ist, sieht im Herrn den Ausbeuter und im Dienenden den Ausgebeuteten. Nicht Macht und Ohnmacht bestimmten das Verhältnis der Schichten zueinander, sondern Verantwortung und Treue ... Sudermann weiss von mancher Armut und Not in seiner Heimat zu erzählen, aber nichts von Neid, Hass und Klassenkampf.[47]

The landlord in Sudermann's works usually labours as hard as any of his peasants at maintaining the prosperity of his farm. The loyalty of his workers is earned, not enforced, and the favour of the Junker landlord, once acquired, is difficult to forfeit. For example, the ruthless Baron Alfred von Röcknitz (whom Emil Mauerhof describes as a "Gemisch von Derbheit, Witzboldigkeit und rohester Sinnlichkeit"[48]) discovers an old retainer who has become a drunkard and sends him back to his estates where he can be nursed by Röcknitz's own wife. The Junkers place their trust in their men and are not hesitant in admitting it. When Bernhard Raschoff (*Die Raschoffs*) complains to his father that the foreman Hennicke advises him too often on how to manage his estates, the older man points out in no uncertain terms that Hennicke is a reliable worker who knows exactly what should be done. Raschoff, rough and domineering, the unquestioned master of his property, has no qualms in placing his full trust in Hennicke:

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[47] Fritz Gause, "Die ostpreussische Heimat Hermann Sudermanns - Kultur und Geist," in *Hermann Sudermann. Ein Dichter an der Grenzscheide zweier Welten*, pp. 29-30.

[48] Emil Mauerhof, *Das naturalistische Drama* (Halle a.S.: Richard Mühlmann's Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1907), p. 93.

> Der hat sehr viel dabei zu tun. Der weiss genau, was deine Inspektoren treiben. Ausserdem, wenn der mir vor einem Erbsenfeld sagt: "Härrke, das wärd nuscht," dann frag' ich nich viel und lass' umpflügen. (234)

The treatment of these peasants is generally fair. Where the Junkers appear as having had affairs with the women on their lands, these women are later suitably married off and treated with affection. In only one case is the Junker represented as being brutal to his peasants, e.g. the Graf von Schranden (*Der Katzensteg*). It is an interesting fact, however, that at no point is it mentioned that the peasants revolt because of von Schranden's cruelty; on the contrary, it is the climate of perfervid nationalism and his own treachery that combine to cause the total rejection of the feudal lord.

Sudermann treats the attitude of these Junker men towards women in humorous but conventional terms. Women of their own class are treated with the strictest propriety. Even mild flirtations are generally frowned upon (the case of Felicitas von Kletzingk is an exception [*Es War*]) and the penalty for trespassing beyond the bounds of accepted behaviour is swift and deadly. This conventionality of Junker men does not extend to women of a lower social rank.

Most of these types are portrayed as having had affairs before and sometimes during marriage, such as von Drosse (*Fritzchen*) or Raschoff (*Die Raschoffs*). There is, where the older generation is concerned, never any question of marrying such women; it is understood with rough common sense that the relationships are of short duration. The fathers regard the sexual escapades of their sons with good-humoured tolerance except when a scandal threatens the family name. In fact, von Drosse actually forbids his son to marry until he has gained in such experiences. Junker marriages are contracted in Sudermann's portrayal for class and property reasons, not love, and where a Junker marries outside his caste, the resulting ostracism is usually sufficient to destroy him not only financially but spiritually (*Der Hasenfellhändler*).

Sudermann depicts the actual lifestyle of these men as simple, almost ascetic in many ways. Their houses are furnished for cosiness, not luxury or ostentation. This is generally because any money is invariably spent upon improving the estates or buying fresh stock. The family is attended only by a few loyal retainers, most of whom have served the dynasty for more than a generation. The tastes of the Junker men are simple as well. Only very few like Ulrich von Kletzingk (*Es War*) are portrayed as having some knowledge of art, music or literature, and these men are always regarded by the others with a mixture of sympathy and disdain. The Junkers almost never appear as reading anything other than Conservative papers or family journals. Whatever literature is mentioned usually turns out to be historical or military in nature. Not surprisingly, intellectuals or non-conformists of any kind are viewed with the deepest suspicion, e.g. von Kellingshausen's reaction to Norbert's pamphlet against the practice of duelling (*Es lebe das Leben*).

The honour code itself is sacred to these Junkers. Duelling, like all other aspects of this code, is jealously guarded as one of the last prerogatives of the aristocracy. Only two Junkers reject the option of a duel in a crisis (von Hanckel-Ilgenstein and von Kletzingk) but it must be noted that in both cases the offending party is and has been for years an object of the deepest affection.

The political views of Sudermann's Junker type tend to be strictly that of the Conservative Party, and the attitude to the Social Democrats and similar parties is one of acute distaste. Though men like Graf Sewitz, Ulrich von Kletzingk and the Freiherr von Laucker-Neuhof express differing views, the fundamental analysis of their standpoint is essentially traditional. Those Junkers who become actually involved in local politics appear as intent on preserving their privileges and keeping out the Social Democrats. A few others subscribe to this view, but also see it as their duty to represent and protect the people in their area to the best of their ability. These men appear as rough, but basically good-natured.

The attitude of the Junkers to the Kaiser and Bismarck is usually one of reverence and unwilling admiration. Junkers like Michael von Kellingshausen (*Es lebe das Leben*) approve of the Iron Chancellor's authoritarian regime:

> ... Ja, ja, da gab's noch 'ne Faust im Lande. Sie sass uns ja oft im Genick, aber sie war doch da. (47)

We see that even Freiherr von Laucker-Neuhof, an embittered enemy of imperial Germany, must reluctantly concede his admiration of Bismarck's total dominance.

Linked to this traditional standpoint is the Junker view of religion. The old Protestant ethic of simplicity, hard work and deep piety remains unchanged in Sudermann's Junkers. They dismiss excessive emotionalism as unhealthy (e.g. the wary reaction to Johanna's ecstatic visions in *Es War*) but their faith is steady and absolute. As Graf Sperner (*Das Blumenboot*) says to the social butterfly Thea:

> Ja, mein liebes gnädiges Fräulein, wer darf so kühn sein, von sich zu sagen, er sei fromm? Jene wahre Gotteskindschaft, wie sie zum Beispiel Moltke eigen war, darnach streben wir ja wohl alle, nicht wahr?[49]

Only one Junker, Herbert von Kray (*Die Freundin*), appears as an atheist, but it is clear that his objections stem more from an intellectual resistance to dogma than to the actual message of Christianity. The others are portrayed as regular church-goers although they leave the usual charitable activities to their womenfolk. Even their attitude to the pastors reinforces the Junker type in

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[49] Hermann Sudermann, *Das Blumenboot*, in *Dramatische Werke*, V (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1923), p. 385.

Sudermann's works; the pastors are treated as respected friends and conversations are on a jovial, man-to-man basis, but one nevers forgets the unspoken but almost tangible authority of the Junker over all he surveys. The unyielding Protestant conscience that Leo von Sellenthin (*Es War*) refers to as a part of the Junker tradition does not alter the fact that these men, young and old, bluff and sentimental, have a natural authority and self-confidence that stems not merely from birth, but from the security that a solid farming background lends. As we shall see, Sudermann's Junker men are almost invariably strong and successful, firmly rooted in the love of their native soil and the overwhelming pride in their estates. All in all, the main type of Junker does not vary appreciably from the novel *Der Katzensteg* (1889) to the play *Der Hasenfellhändler* (1925). In appearance and behaviour, these men display striking parallels.

THE MAJOR CHARACTERS

1. Schranden (*Der Katzensteg*, 1889)
2. Boleslav von Schranden (*Der Katzensteg*)
3. Baron von Hanckel-Ilgenstein (*Jolanthes Hochzeit*, 1892)
4. Baron von Krakow (*Jolanthes Hochzeit*)
5. Leo von Sellenthin (*Es War*, 1894)
6. Ulrich von Kletzingk (*Es War*)
7. Baron von Stolt (*Es War*)

8. Rhaden (*Es War*)
9. Drosse (*Fritzchen*, 1896)
10. Baron von Röcknitz (*Das Glück im Winkel*, 1896)
11. Michael von Kellingshausen (*Es lebe das Leben*, 1902)
12. Berkelwitz-Grünhof (*Es lebe das Leben*)
13. Freiherr von Laucker-Neuhof (*Sturmgeselle Sokrates*, 1903)
14. Graf Sperner (*Das Blumenboot*, 1905)
15. Wittich (*Die Lichtbänder*, 1907)
16. Pierre (*Die Lichtbänder*)
17. Herbert von Kray (*Die Freundin*, 1915)
18. Raschoff (*Die Raschoffs*, 1920)
19. B. Raschoff (*Die Raschoffs*)
20. Baron von Krammer (*Die Raschoffs*)
21. Graf Sewitz (*Heilige Zeit*, 1921)
22. Selbing (*Der Hüter der Schwelle*, 1921)
23. Wisniewski (*Der Hüter der Schwelle*)
24. Baron von Ockhardt (*Der Hasenfellhändler*, 1925)
25. Magnus von Ockhardt (*Der Hasenfellhändler*)
26. Fritz von Nadolny (*Purzelchen*, 1928)

Der Katzensteg (1889)

Graf von Schranden is an early, highly negative figure in this category. Brutal and treacherous, he is hated by his peasants with good cause. Boleslav, his son, remembers him even in manhood with fear and distaste:

> Er hatte den Vater nie geliebt. Der war ein rauher, gewaltsamer Mann gewesen, der die Bauern peitschte, von dessen Lachen und von dessen Schelten das Haus in gleicher Weise erzitterte und vor dem er selber nicht mehr galt als etwa der Teckel, der ihm, wenn er gut gelaunt war, in die Absätze beissen durfte und den er im nächsten Augenblick mit einem Fusstoss weit in die Lüfte schleuderte. Die knorrige, kleine Gestalt, das gelbe, breitknochige Gesicht mit dem kohlschwarzen Knebelbart und den kleinen, funkelnden grauen Augen hatte ihm, so weit er zurückdenken konnte, als Schreckbild gegolten. (20)

This aura of crudity and casual violence is reinforced by the scenes of debauchery that the child Boleslav is witness to. In *Der Katzensteg*, Sudermann refers to the custom of *droit de siegneur* for the first time. Where the type of Sudermann Junker is concerned, sexual relationships with the peasant women on their estates is generally depicted as based on free consent and mutual affection; in Schranden's case, however, he makes full use of his feudal privileges to exploit the women in his power:

> ... und manche halbaufgeblühte Knospe, die im heimischen Erdreich aufgewachsen war, fiel seinen Wünschen anheim. Nicht, das er dies schamlos und öffentlich als frevlerisches Gewerbe betrieben hätte, er liebte nur, sich keinen Zwang aufzuerlegen, und schliesslich war, was er tat, nichts wie sein gutes Herrenrecht, dass ihm von Traditions wegen verbrieft war und dessen Ausübung im Grunde niemanden wunder nahm ... (26)

The image we perceive is that of a primitive, brutal character without moral scruples of any kind. His similarity to the Junker type lies not only in his lack of intellectual prowess but also in the domineering, sheer animal force of his personality. His physical appearance echoes the type in its robustness and lack of refinement, but is related as well to the brooding, ominous father figure that Sudermann made famous in *Frau Sorge* and other works.

It is a curious fact, however, that all Schranden's abuses of his power are mentioned in passing, so to speak, and that it is his betrayal of Prussia to a foreign nation that is dwelt upon in detail. As Leo Berg puts it:

> Ein sanft verklärender Schein legt sich allmählich über diesen und seine That.[50]

If we consider this further, we see that the peasants, most of whom were ill-treated by Schranden, are portrayed as a bestial rabble, barely human in their behaviour. There is little difference in the manner in which Sudermann depicts exploiter and exploited since both are treacherous and primitive in every way. It may be seen that there are very few references on the part of Sudermann to these aristocrats seriously abusing their people. Leo von Sellenthin (*Es War*) may horsewhip the pastor's son but this is a punishment for endangering his sister's reputation and actually proves to be the shock that transforms the young profligate into a conscientous student. The aristocratic heroine of *Der Gänsehirt* may inadvertently cause her peasant friend to be whipped, but it is plain that she suffers far more than he does. It is evident that the Junker type in Sudermann's works is almost invariably a benevolent tyrant, who treats his family and workers in the same jovial, heavy-handed fashion.

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[50] Leo Berg, *Zwischen zwei Jahrhunderten. Gesammelte Essays* (Frankfurt a.M.: Rütten & Loening, 1896), p. 212.

Die Lichtbänder (1907)

Pierre, the only other quite negative figure, appears in the play *Die Lichtbänder*. He is the complete opposite of the Junker type, associated with it only by birth. An effeminate, neurotic fop, he and his mistress Julia are alike to an almost incestuous degree. Both live for the moment and for the senses; their over-refined needs have degenerated into decadence. It is thus no coincidence that the action takes place within the stifling confines of an ancient pavilion, with masses of dying roses contributing to the suffocating atmosphere of deceit, childish cruelty and cheap romance.

Sudermann emphasizes the contrast, physical and mental, between Pierre and the Junker Wittich. Pierre is a "Muttersöhnchen"[51] who is a coward at heart. He regulates his every movement according to the wishes of his invalid mother and has no authority at all in his home. Julia's feelings for him are a mixture of affection and contempt, a very different reaction from the fear she feels in Wittich's silent presence. His physical prowess, dangerous temper and oppressively intense devotion drive her into an affair with Pierre. In character, Wittich belongs to the Junker type; without much understanding for the intellectual or cultural aspects of life but deeply conscious of his duties and his honour. His obsessive love for Julia is the only factor that sets him slightly apart and delays his inevitable reaction to the insolence of his wife and her lover.

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[51] Hermann Sudermann, *Die Lichtbänder*, in *Dramatische Werke*, III (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1923), 398.

Jolanthes Hochzeit (1892)

An example of the typically positive Sudermann Junker is Baron von Hanckel-Ilgenstein in the early short story *Jolanthes Hochzeit*. The plot is based upon the old Romeo and Juliet theme with an unexpected twist, lent its effectiveness by the first-person narration. The Baron himself is one of Sudermann's most engaging characters, created in the Pickwickian tradition. His Junker earthiness and sentimentality are combined with a gentle, self-deprecating sense of humour. Standing at his friend's grave, he says:

> - - - - - So am offenen Grabe eines alten Kumpans zu stehen - schändlich, sag' ich Ihnen, meine Herren, einfach ekelhaft. - Man pflanzt die Beine in das aufgeschaufelte Erdreich und wickelt den Schnurrbart und macht ein dummes Gesicht und möcht' sich dabei die Seele aus dem Leibe heulen.[52]

This combination of humour and melancholy, rooted in the sturdy inhabitants of this rich province, was so successful that Sudermann could write to his wife that the mirth the story provoked at a public reading began with the first line:

> Aber dann ging's los: Vom ersten Momente an hatte ich mein Publikum in der Gewalt. Schon bei den Anfangsworten "Sehn Se, meine Härren ..." rauschte

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[52] Hermann Sudermann, *Jolanthes Hochzeit*, in *Romane und Novellen*, II (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1930), 275.

> hörbar eine behagliche, genussfreudige Stimmung durch den Saal.[53]

Hanckel-Ilgenstein's character is that of the Junker type, but with the additional graces of humour and humility. His forthright manner and physical courage are pure Junker traits:

> Aber - na, sehen Sie mich an - und ohne dass ich prahlen will, ich kann mit dieser meiner Faust einen Bullen zu Boden schlagen, vor ein Paar Kötern brauch' ich doch nicht Reissaus zu nehmen! (279)

Incapable of subtlety or deceit, he is only too conscious of all his shortcomings, such as his physical appearance and his advanced age. Sudermann tends to portray his Junker type as physically graceless and even coarse, with piercing eyes, a military bearing and leaning to corpulence. When Hanckel, fresh from an encounter with the ravishing Jolanthe, decides to inspect himself in the mirror, the result is less than encouraging:

> Resultat niederschmetternd ... dicker, kahler Schädel, Specknacken, Säcke unter den Augen, Doppelkinn, das Ganze feurig-braunrot wie ein scharf angeheizter Kupferkessel. (288)

The similarities to the description of the Junker Leo von Sellenthin (*Es War*) are striking:

> Dazu lachte er mit seinem ganzen prächtigen Gebiss und liess die Zunge schnalzend über die Gaumen schnellen. Spreizbeinig, die Hände in den Hosentaschen, stand er da in seiner vollblütigen, breitbrüstigen Männerkraft. Der üppige, dunkelblonde Vollbart wölbte sich in zwei halbrunden Bogen nach den straffen Backen hin, die samt der geraden, schmalsattligen Nase wie aus Erz gegossen schienen, und flatterte dann zusammen mit dem krausen

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[53] *Briefe Hermann Sudermanns an seine Frau (1891-1924)* Ed. Dr. Irmgard Leux (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1932), pp. 224-225.

> Schnurrbart in lockeren, hellen Strähnen auseinander. Das bis auf die Stoppeln heruntergeschnittene Haupthaar legte die gewaltige Wölbung des Schädels bloss, der wie die Kuppel eines Doms auf dem roten fleischigen Nacken sass. (16)

There are other Junker traits in Hanckel's character. He is, for example, a knowledgeable and thoroughly efficient farmer, whose judgement of property, bloodstock and farming methods is faultless. When he visits the Krakow family for the first time, his automatic reaction is to run an expert eye over the manor and its surrounding lands:

> Schönes Land! ... Nichts zu sagen! - Bisschen verludert - aber genial. - Viel schwarze Brache, aber vielleicht für Winterraps oder so ... Weizen lala ... Rindvieh famos. (280)

These are the laconic, accurate observations of a farmer who loves his work and his native soil, who can analyse the potential in an estate and run it at a profit. It is plain that the Junker type which appears in Sudermann's works is not the impoverished aristocrat of many nineteenth-century novels, who finds it difficult, if not impossible, to adjust to the changing times, as in Immermann's *Epigonen*, Spielhagen's *Sturmflut* or Freytag's *Soll und Haben*. This type was doomed to severe difficulties due to a reluctance to consider efficient farming principles. That the type did exist is confirmed by Bramsted in his book *Aristocracy and the Middle-Classes in Germany*:

> Besides this indifference, there is to be found amongst other nobles an avowed disinclination to or incapacity for accommodating themselves to technical and industrial development. Either the aristocrat would not adapt himself because he considered the middle-class profit-making economy unrefined and not becoming to his class, or else he could not adapt

> himself because he was degenerate and lacking in the mental energy that the new struggle for existence demanded. This type of noble rejected the "middleclass" principle of labour for the sake of profit, thereby condemning the so-called "revenue-economy" in which expenditure has to be strictly regulated according to income; he clung much more to the seigneurial idea of "expenditure economy" in which income is determined for the moment by the necessary expenditure, and it is therefore very characteristic that even at the beginning of the twentieth century a large minority of junker-estates were still being worked without sharing in capitalist tendencies.[54]

Sudermann's Junkers are, on the other hand, depicted mostly as powerful, vigorous men, who enjoy farming, eagerly embrace advances in farming techniques and know how to drive a shrewd bargain. Alfred von Röcknitz (*Das Glück im Winkel*) cannot quite conceal his pride when describing his work to his ex-tutor:

> ... Seit Sie zuletzt auf Witzlingen waren, hab' ich sechzig Morgen Wiese drainiert - das Tiefkulturareal hab' ich aufs Doppelte gebracht ... Bockzucht hab' ich angelegt ... 32 Stücke Remonte hab' ich abgeliefert - 'ne transportable Eisenbahn hab' ich gekauft für die Rübenabfuhr - die verpump' ich nu der Reih' nach an die Besitzer und verdien' ein klotziges Geld dabei. Denn, weiss der Deibel, ich bin so 'n Kerl, mir glückt alles.[55]

The Junkers here work themselves as hard as they drive their peasants. They run their estates as efficiently as any industry and make it their business to oversee every detail. Most are portrayed either as wealthy or quite comfortably off. Fritz von Nadolny (*Purzelchen*) is the only Junker who loses his estate to speculators, but it is made clear that the economic disaster following World War I is partly responsible. (It is also significant that Fritz never stops dreaming of one day recovering his property, thus returning to his heritage).

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[54] Ernest K. Bramsted, *Aristocracy and the Middle-Classes in Germany. Social Types in German Literature 1830-1900* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), pp. 46-47.

[55] Hermann Sudermann, *Das Glück im Winkel*, in *Dramatische Werke*, III (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1923), 34.

This deep love of farming is not based solely upon natural business acumen or any need for profit, but rather upon the primeval link of man and soil. Sudermann's Junkers cherish their lands because they hold them in trust for future generations, and also because life without family property is unimaginable. Junker honour and self-respect are founded upon the knowledge that their estates are flourishing. Property and family are inseparable and of overwhelming importance to the concept of personal and dynastic honour. Hanckel-Ilgenstein's horror when Lothar suggests selling his estates to pay off his debts is perfectly genuine:

> "Schäm dich was, Junge," sag' ich. "Das Hemd auf dem Leib verschleudert man nicht, und aus dem Bett schlägt man kein Brennholz." (279)

Land is a part of the Junker's spirit, an integral component of his dignity. In Sudermann's portrayal, the Junker is inextricably rooted in the soil of his homeland; to leave it or to sell up are only steps to be taken in a final emergency. Even marriages are contracted mainly with the intent of expanding or improving the estates. As Graf Sperner (*Das Blumenboot*) confides to Thea:

> ... Ich bin der Älteste von sechs Geschwistern, und die Gesundheit meines alten Herrn ist leider sehr

> struppiert. - Wenn ich das Gut übernehme - dass ich den bunten Rock dann endgültig ausziehn muss, das will ich dabei auch gleich gesagt haben - , dann habe ich fünfen auszuzahlen. Da muss mir die Mitgift meiner Frau das Rückgrat stärken ... Denn erstens will ich nicht vor die Hunde gehn, und zweitens - ja, sehn Sie mal - so'n Fleck Erde - hier in der Grossstadt kennt man so'n Gefühl nicht - das steht einem höher als alles in der Welt - da muss man 'reinschmeissen können mit vollen Händen - verstehn Sie das? Nee, das verstehn Sie nich. Aber das werden Sie lernen, wenn's Ihnen mitgehört. (386)

Land is thus not merely land; it is the life-blood of the family, the firm foundation upon which the dynasty's survival is assured. The Junker draws his spiritual strength from his land; it is not merely owned, but loved. If he sells his estates or fails to make them pay, he is divesting himself of nothing less than his home and his self-respect. Without land, he loses by some strange alchemy not only his dignity but the respect of his peers; he languishes in a moral and social vacuum generally reserved for the vagrant and the transient.

Even the thought and speech patterns of these men are fashioned by their close links to soil and bloodstock. Hanckel-Ilgenstein is overwhelmed by Jolanthe's beauty at their first meeting. However, the romantic images he employs to describe this vision stem not from the world of poetry, but of horses, pedigrees and breeding potential:

> Meine Herren, alle Achtung! Wie vor den Kopf gestossen stand ich da ... Rasse, meine Herren, Rasse! ... ein Körper wie 'ne junge Königin ... das Haar losgelöst in tausend Wirbeln und Wickeln - goldbraun wie so die Mähne von einem Berber ... Der Hals weiss und üppig mit einem leichten Kropfansatz ... der Busen nicht zu hoch aber breit ausgelegt mit seitlichen Wölbungen, was wir beim Pferde eine Löwenbrust nennen ... und wenn sie atmetete, schien

> der ganze Körper mitzuatmen, so mächtig wälzte sich die Luft durch diesen jungen, edelschlächtigen Organismus [...] Fesselgelenke elegant ... Beckenbildung noch unreif, aber tadellos und zu normaler Dehnung geschaffen ... (283)

Hanckel-Ilgenstein's lifestyle is also characteristic of Sudermann's Junker type. Although he is, as Krakow points out, the richest man in the area, his home and surroundings are simple, even austere. Describing his bed, for example, the Baron waxes eloquent over its Spartan comfort:

> Meine Herren, ich hatte ein Bett ... und hab' es noch - ... ein ganz gewöhnliches Bett ... schmal wie ein Sarg - - aus rotgebeiztem Tannenholz - auf Gurten, ohne Matratze und ohne Federboden, mit einem Elchfell statt des Unterbettes ... alle Jahre zweimal wird der Strohsack frisch gefüllt, das ist der ganze Luxus. (289)

In the same way, what attracts him to the Krakow household is not its ostentation, but rather its simplicity:

> Das war so'n Winkelchen vorm Fenster mit geschnitzten Eichenschranken drumrum - von Efeu überwachsen ... ganz mollig ... Da schien die Sonne blank mitten durch wie durch eine Laube ... und drin auf dem Tisch lag ein Wollenknäuel in einem Elfenbeinschälchen - und eine Nummer "Daheim" ... und ein angeknabbertes Stückchen Torte.
> Wie gesagt: ganz mollig. (282)

Hanckel's lifestyle is thus like his character, straightforward and plain, in which wild emotions and extravagant phrases have no place. His actions, upon learning that Jolanthe has agreed to become his wife, scarcely correspond to the celebrations of a bridegroom:

> ... Als ich nach Hause fuhr, wiederholte ich mir alle Augenblicke: "Hanckel, was bist du für ein Glückspilz. Ein solches Kleinod in deinem Alter ... Nu tanze, nu schreie, nu benimm dich wie ein Verrückter. Das Erlebnis des heutigen Tages verlangt es von dir."

> Aber, meine Herren, ich tanzte nicht, ich schrie nicht, ich revidierte die eingelaufenen Belege und liess mir ein Glas Grog machen. Das war der ganze Jubel. (297)

There is nothing sophisticated about this Junker, but he is by no means ignorant or insensitive to good taste. He possesses an instinctive knowledge of what is correct, based not upon the vagaries of fashion or propriety, but upon the natural instincts of a personality whole and at peace with itself. These instincts inform Hanckel rightly that something is very wrong in his marriage, but his lack of guile renders him helpless to understand the intricacies of human passions. These same impulses compel him, however, to forgive the ruthless egoism of the two lovers and to arrange a happy ending to the whole affair. He can do nothing else, for, as he points out resignedly, he is a "guter Kerl", and whether he likes this description or not, he must always act as one. Friedrich Kirchner, on the other hand, perhaps justifiably dismisses this "happy ending" as quite improbable.[56] Throughout the work, the author emphasizes Hanckel's good nature, a dominant trait in most of his Junker types. As Hanckel says, looking at himself in the mirror:

> Und was schlimmer war als das alles: Wie ich mich anseh' in meiner sechs Fuss langen Massigkeit, geht mir ein Licht auf, warum die Menschen mich von Anbeginn den "guten Hanckel" genannt haben. Schon beim Regiment hiess es immer: "Hanckel? Lumen - ne! Aber 'n guter Kerl!"

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[56] Friedrich Kirchner, *Gründeutschland. Ein Streifzug durch die jüngste deutsche Dichtung* (Wien: Kirchner & Schmidt: 1893), p. 185.

> Und bist du erst mit so einem Kainszeichen versehen, dann wird das ganze übrige Leben nur noch eine Kette von Gelegenheiten, um die Probe darauf zu machen. - Angeweimert und angeulkt, - angepumpt und angeblasen wirst du Tag für Tag, und machst du mal einen schüchternen Versuch, dich dagegen zu wehren, so heisst es sofort:" Was, Sie wollen ein guter Kerl sein?" Da hast du gut schreien:" Ich will gar kein guter Kerl sein!" Du bist es und bleibst es, denn du bist als solcher geaicht und gestempelt. (288)

Thus we see that the character traits of the Junker type as portrayed by Sudermann are surprisingly strong, positive and uniform. This, however, by no means indicates that the author overlooks the more negative aspects such as the qualities of ruthlessness and arrogance, bigotry and intolerance, and, perhaps most important, the inflexible will to dominate. Alfred von Röcknitz (*Das Glück im Winkel*) is a classic example of the Junker capacity for brutality when thwarted. As a Junker, he takes especial pride in his own ruthlessness, a trait he ascribes to his robber baron ancestors:

> ... Wenn ich einem was nehmen will, denn tu' ich's Aug' in Auge, Brust gegen Brust ... Diesen schönen Charakterzug hab' ich nämlich von meinen Vorfahren geerbt ... (73)

When he is confronted with Elisabeth's resistance, Sudermann shows how the ardent lover is suddenly transformed into a merciless stranger who compels Elisabeth to make a choice that almost costs her her life. In the same way, Leo von Sellenthin (*Es War*), in spite of his undeniable good nature, is capable of brutal action if faced with any threat to his authority, e.g. his promise to murder his wastrel uncle. On the whole, however, the Junker figures are clearly the most engaging group of aristocrats to appear in Sudermann's works. Taking the few exceptions in this category, we perceive only modifications upon the general type.

Pierre (*Die Lichtbänder*) is the only character who is different from the type in every way. Apart from his nominal inclusion in the ranks of the country nobility, there is nothing even vaguely Teutonic about his character, a fact that is emphasized by his French name. The elder Schranden (*Der Katzensteg*) conforms to the type in every aspect but one: the Junker roughness of manner is transformed in him into vice and brutality, a change necessary to make his act of treachery plausible.

Freiherr von Laucker-Neuhof (*Sturmgeselle Sokrates*) also conforms to the type in all points except that he does not share the lack of interest in politics displayed by some Junkers, or the extreme conservatism of others. Towards the end of the play, however, he admits his unwilling admiration for Bismarck, who has destroyed his hopes for a democratic Germany. He concedes the "überragende Genie des einstigen Standesgenossen"[57] and explains his resignation:

> Da war jener schon ein anderer Kerl. Wir hätten die gelbe Pestfahne vor sein Haus gesteckt. So sehr hassten wir ihn. Trotzdem hat er aus seinem Unrecht sein Recht gemacht - trotzdem hat er uns Königgrätz und Sedan zwischen die Zähne geworfen. Nu geht die Welt seinen Weg. Und wir müssen mit. *Wir müssen - mit*. (93)

Thus, while Laucker-Neuhof does not actually vote for the Conservatives, he has come to terms with Germany's political climate and this lethargy precludes any constructive initiative for the democratization of political processes.

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[57] H. Stümcke, *Die vierte Wand; Theatralische Eindrücke und Studien* (Leipzig: G. Wigand, 1904), p. 122.

Graf Sewitz (*Heilige Zeit*) displays an academic interest in the workings of the left-wing parties and even concedes that the communists are sometimes justified in their demands. This attitude, though far removed from the revulsion of other Junkers for the SDP, does not mask Sewitz's fundamentally conventional views on German politics, the war and the way to win it.

Herbert von Kray (*Die Freundin*) is also a sober, hard-working Junker on the lines of Graf Sperner, but his atheism sets him apart from the traditional piety that Sudermann describes. Even here, one sees that Kray, far from rejecting the divinity he feels is ever-present in life, only rejects the outdated dogma that an organized church would force on him.

Ulrich von Kletzingk (*Es War*) can be regarded as belonging to the Junker type in only one respect- his knowledge of farming. In all other respects, he is the exact antithesis of the jovial, heavy-handed Junker type. His quiet nature, his extreme sensitivity and ill-health all render him the opposite of Leo, who with Felicitas von Kletzingk, forms the triangle of passion in this classic novel of East Prussian nobility. Leo attacks life with gusto, a robust extrovert who dominates family and friends with the same blend of tyranny and good humour. Ulrich on the other hand, takes little pleasure in his existence; his interest in literature and music reflects an introvert character that sets him worlds apart from his peers. His compassion and civilized nature make it impossible for him to fight a duel with Leo and, in this respect as well, he is different from the other Junkers, who would not hesitate in challenging even a close friend in cold blood for such an offense to their honour.

Thus *Es War* demonstrates the triumph of humanity over the *Götzendienst* of the aristocratic code of honour that demands death for dishonour. Though Ulrich parts from his friend, resigned to a life of loneliness, *Es War* ends on a note of muted optimism, with Leo determined to win back his companion. His powerful Junker vitality has at last reasserted itself after the suffering and humiliation of the last months:

> Er warf die Ruder hin, reckte sich hoch empor, und die geballten Fäuste nach Ulrich hin ausstreckend schrie er lachend übers Wasser: "Dich hol' ich mir noch zurück! ... Da pass mal auf!" Der Schimmer drüben verschwand. Er aber setzte sich wieder auf seinen Platz und trieb das Boot still auf den Halewitzer Strand - hohen Feiertag im Herzen. (549)

F. THE JUNKER WOMEN

The female of the species is depicted by Sudermann mainly as a capable, but rigidly conventional housewife, the counterpart of her husband. The lives of these women in his works revolve solely around their families and their estates. Industrious from morning till night, they control all matters dealing with their large households, down to the smallest detail. Nothing is left completely to the servants; the mistress of the estate knows everything there is to be learnt about pickling, preserving, milking, breeding, current market prices, dairy farming, etc.

Sudermann's aristocratic ladies take their responsibilities seriously, which include the welfare of their retainers. The more kindly ones display an almost maternal solicitude like Bettina von Röcknitz (*Das Glück im Winkel*), who is overjoyed at the thought of nursing back to health an old servant who has fallen on bad times. Even where this sense of duty to one's dependants is tinged with extreme social arrogance, Sudermann portrays the ladies as nevertheless inspiring complete loyalty by their rectitude if not their kindness (*Der Hasenfellhändler*).

The leisure hours of these women are entirely devoted to completely conventional pursuits, e.g. the church and charitable activities. Their social life is decorous in the extreme and gossip is the result of the slightest indiscretion. At no point does Sudermann depict these ladies as showing any interest in intellectual or cultural matters.

Only Alice, (*Die indische Lilie*) who resides in town and not on her estate, reveals a desperate hunger for knowledge; this hunger, however, stems less from her own desire for fulfilment than a need to impress her lover Niebeldingk.

Compared to their men, these solid, practical, unimaginative housewives appear less vigorous and picturesque. For Kawerau, Sudermann's male characters were on the whole far more interesting than the women in his works:

> ... Gegenüber den prachtvollen Characterköpfen der Schranden und Sellenthin, der Hanckel und Krakow, verblassen die übrigen Frauenköpfe fast allesamt ...[58]

The unyielding moral code they represent is intolerant of any deviation from accepted social standards, whatever the reasons. The existence of unbridgeable social barriers is taken for granted, and the snobbery these women exercise is depicted as devastating. The cruel snubs Agathe von Ockhardt (*Der Hasenfellhändler*) delivers originate in the unconscious need to defend her social territory against any intrusion by someone of lower birth. Thus the jovial arrogance of the Junkers is reflected in the more subtle prejudices of their women.

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[58] Waldemar Kawerau, *Hermann Sudermann. Eine kritische Studie*, p. 79.

THE MAJOR CHARACTERS

1. Jolanthe von Krakow (*Jolanthes Hochzeit*, 1892)
2. Baronin von Krakow (*Jolanthes Hochzeit*)
3. Felicitas von Kletzingk (*Es War*, 1894)
4. Johanna Prachwitz (*Es War*)
5. Herta Prachwitz (*Es War*)
6. Frau von Sellenthin (*Es War*)
7. Elly von Sellenthin (*Es War*)
8. Malwine von Stolt (*Es War*)
9. Frau von Drosse (*Fritzchen*, 1896)
10. Agnes (*Fritzchen*)
11. Elisabeth Weidemann (*Das Glück im Winkel*, 1896)
12. Bettina von Röcknitz (*Das Glück im Winkel*)
13. Beate von Kellingshausen (*Es lebe das Leben*, 1902)
14. Julia (*Die Lichtbänder*, 1907)
15. Alice (*Die indische Lilie*, 1911)
16. Alice von Hilgenfeld (*Die Freundin*, 1915)
17. Edith Raschoff (*Die Raschoffs*, 1920)
18. Baronin von Krammer (*Die Raschoffs*)
19. Leonie von Selbing (*Der Hüter der Schwelle*, 1921)
20. Melitta Sewitz (*Das deutsche Schicksal*, 1921)
21. Agathe von Ockhardt (*Der Hasenfellhändler*, 1925)
22. Barbara von Ockhardt (*Der Hasenfellhändler*)
23. Philippine von Ockhardt (*Der Hasenfellhändler*)

Es War (1894)

Two typical examples of Junker ladies as portrayed by Sudermann are Malwine von Stolt and Herta Prachwitz who appear in his early novel *Es War*. They embody the best and the worst character traits of this particular type.

Malwine von Stolt, a large, dignified aristocrat, is a rigidly traditional figure. Even her clothes are plain and decorous in the extreme. For Malwine, the world is strictly divided into the aristocracy and other, unimportant classes. Her arrogance is all the more striking for being unstated. She does not dream of questioning long-accepted social values and expects a high standard of modesty and decorum from all about her.

Malwine von Stolt's world is rigidly defined, revolving around her family and her property and, of course, her aristocratic prerogatives. A practical, down-to-earth woman, she has no time for whims and fancies. She correctly dismisses Felicitas as shallow and manipulative, because her instinct for whatever is artificial or frivolous is unerring, if intolerant, being based on solid common sense.

While inflexible, Malwine also demonstrates a startling tolerance for male weaknesses. Though herself fastidious, she realises and accepts with equanimity the fact that her two officer sons will inevitably become involved with women. Her only concern is that they do not wreck their chances of a suitable alliance by compromising girls of their own class:

> ... Aber was mir nicht gefällt, ist, dass sie lernen, Frauen aus der Gesellschaft - aus *unserer* Gesellschaft - mit begehrlichem Auge zu betrachten... (7)

On the other hand, she unconsciously echoes the viewpoint of the Junker men by regarding women of a lower class as fair game for her sons:

> ... Ich würde unseren Jungens auch weiter keinen Vorwurf machen. Selbst den Mägden zwischen den Heuhaufen und den Schankmamsells in den Gasthäusern dürfen sie nachlaufen, soviel es ihnen Spass macht - (7)

What Malwine von Stolt will not tolerate is the slightest breath of scandal. The rules of her society must be obeyed, whatever the cost to the individual in terms of integrity and honour. Her conventionality is quite unscrupulous, her instincts sound and her intellect severely limited. Her interest in a world of literature, idealism and philosophy is non-existent. Her description of the correspondence between her sons and Felicitas reveals her contempt for this sphere that lies outside her ken:

> ... Eine richtige - wie sagt man? - ästhetische Korrespondenz ... So überspannt wie nur möglich. Menschheitsadel und Vollmondschein und Einswissen mit der Natur und Paul Heyse und andrer Unsinn. - So das Gehabe, mit dem sich sonst bei den sehr jungen Leuten die allererste Verliebtheit maskiert. - Natürlich war gar keine Rede davon, dass ich unsere braven Jungens diese alberne Rolle noch weiterspielen liess, denn sie haben zwar einen ausgezeichneten Pferdeverstand, aber der Sinn für das sogenannte 'Höhere' geht ihnen ja - Gott sei Dank - gänzlich ab. (10)

Sudermann portrays Malwine, like the other country gentlewomen, as a thoroughly efficient housewife, who excels in the domestic arts. Referring to an expected visit by

Felicitas, she waxes eloquent about her "Schaumwaffeln", which she claims are the "Stolz ihres bescheiden-häuslichen Sinnes." (12) (Even Beate von Kellingshausen [*Es lebe das Leben*], the sophisticated Egeria of the Conservative Party, enjoys describing a special dish of her own invention which actually bears the family name.)

The conversation of a group of Junker ladies at a party in Malwine's home reflects not only their efficiency, but also their unspoken laws of behaviour:

> Man sprach, wie die Saison es mit sich brachte, vom Eingemachten. Frau von Neuhaus auf Lubowen, eine rundliche Sechzigerin mit einem grünlichen Stirnnetz auf grauem Haargekräusel, hatte die neuen Abdampfapparate durchaus unpraktisch gefunden, die Baronin von Krassow bestritt dies in einem überlegen müden Tone, und die alte Frau von Sembritzky, die seit der Heirat ihres Sohnes mit der kleinen Meta Podewils das alte Schema der bösen Schwiegermütter nach Kräften auszufüllen bestrebt war, schaute derweilen stier und wütend wie ein durch die Gitterstäbe gekitzelter Geier um sich, als argwöhnte sie, dass sie jemand von ihrem Ehrenplatze vertreiben wollte. Neben ihr sass Meta, das arme, junge Ding, drückte dem alten Qualgeist in ängstlicher Ehrfurcht die Hände und schielte mit einem Lächeln der Sehnsucht nach dem Tische der jungen Mädchen hinüber, von dem sie auf ewig verbannt war. - Die Hausfrau selber hatte links neben Felicitas Platz genommen; in ihrer Gardistenhöhe starr aufgerichtet sass sie da, und während sie zärtlich auf sie niederschaute, hielt sie schielend Wache, ob auch niemand von den im Nebenzimmer versammelten Herren mit ihr Blicke wechselte. (223-224)

In this concise description, Sudermann has condensed all the provincialism and social values of the women of the Junker class in his works. Joseph von Eichendorff himself created an unforgettable portrait of such women which bears striking similarity to the type described by Sudermann:

> ... Denn ein guter Ökonom war das Ideal der Herren, der Ruf einer "Kernwirtin" der Stolz der Dame. Sie hatten weder Zeit noch Sinn für die Schönheit der Natur, sie waren selbst noch Naturprodukte.[59]

Herta Prachwitz, on the other hand, provides the contrast to Malwine; she represents Junker feminine principles of responsibility and industry without any accompanying snobbery or deceit. One of Sudermann's most positive characters, she embodies all that is best in the Junker tradition.

The Junker passion for the soil and farming is completely natural for the girl Herta, who comes to live with Leo's family. In his absence, she has instinctively attempted to improve the run-down property. No work in the household, kitchen or gardens is too minor for her industrious hands. She takes over and manages to increase profits in the breeding and sale of poultry, the marketing of milk, eggs and vegetables. The farming efficiency of her male counterparts is echoed in the way she carefully maintains even her account books. She is at home in every area of this estate, and has also made the health of the dairy herd her responsibility:

> Eine schöne Holländerin mit klugem, kleinem Hirschkopf, die zu ihren Lieblingen gehörte, schien ihr arg gedunsen. Gewiss war sie beim Weiden auf einen frischen Kleeschlag geraten. Sie rief sich den Hirten, machte ihm ein Paar Vorwürfe, und befahl ihm, tagüber auf sie acht zu haben. Nötigenfalls sollte er sich Hilfe holen, damit ihr die Schlundröhre eingeschoben würde. (62)

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[59] Joseph von Eichendorff, *Der Adel und die Revolution. Werke und Schriften.* II (Stuttgart: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1957), 1026-1027.

Herta's natural capability extends to experimenting with production and marketing methods on the estates in order to increase profits. Explaining this to Leo, she demonstrates how her innovations in the sale of fruit have paid off:

> ... Frisches Gemüse kam an jedem Sonnabend nach Münsterberg zu Markte, doch lohnte es sich kaum, mit den Bauern zu konkurrieren, hingegen waren in einem anderen Produktionszweige grosse Erfolge zu verzeichnen gewesen. Sie hatte sich mehrere Dutzend kleiner rohrgeflochtener Körbchen angeschafft, die ein blinder Mann zu zwanzig Pfennig pro Stück für sie anfertigte. Diese Körbchen wurden zierlich mit Blättern ausgelegt, je nach der Jahreszeit mit Erdbeeren oder Kirschen gefüllt und durch den Milchjungen in Münsterberg zum Verkauf ausgeboten, wo sie schon eine grosse Berühmtheit errungen hatten. (95)

In many ways the character of Herta is a rewarding study of the bewildering difficulties of adolescence. One of Sudermann's most attractive characters, she portrays an ideal in her physical courage, honesty and kindness which are compared at every turn to the frivolity of Elly and the cold narcissism of Felicitas. Her code of personal honour is as firm as any Junker's and her natural sense of morality is free of the bigotry represented by Malwine von Stolt. Innocence is frequently emphasized in Sudermann's works, leading to a well-known series of young female characters who possess this quality and tend to suffer for it. It is seen most clearly in Herta's character, a budding Junker woman who learns responsibility before she learns, slowly and painfully, the first pangs of love for Leo, in spite of all his faults.

In Sudermann's portrayal of innocence, this virtue when allied with strength of character, frequently lends the feminine spirit a peculiar clarity of instinct. Herta's instincts, as we see, are acute in the extreme to deceit or danger, even when her own inexperience prevents her from understanding her feelings, such as her rejection of Kutowski, in spite of all his attempts at friendship, or her sudden acute tension upon meeting Felicitas for the first time:

> Da geschah etwas, was sie sich nicht erklären konnte. In den Augenblick, da die Lippen der Fremden sich den ihren näherten, ergriff sie von neuem das unheimliche Gefühl, das sie bei dem Aufschrei der Mutter durchrieselt hatte. - Wie erstarrt liess sie sich küssen und atmete schwer, denn der betäubende Wohlgeruch, der in dieser Umarmung über sie herströmte, benahm ihr fast die Luft. (262)

Honesty and innocence meet here with all-consuming egoism and amorality. Herta is aware on one level only of whole-hearted admiration for the sophisticated Felicitas, but her purity of instinct warns her of potential danger. Her character is contrasted to Felicitas, who undergoes no change of personality in her eventful life. She moves through society like a wilful child, always inspiring masculine devotion, but never maturing. Her selfishness and superficiality make it impossible for her to feel too deeply and for too long. According to William Diamond, she is "a creature of endless pose, happy as long as she can be the heroine of every drama."[60] Her frantic grief at the death of her only child (for which she is responsible) is soon transformed into self-pity; even her determination to die with Leo in a suicide pact is soon forgotten in a sudden arousal of sexual desire.

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[60] William Diamond, "Hermann Sudermann", *Monatshefte für deutschen Unterricht*, 21 (1929), 161.

Herta, on the other hand, matures in the course of the novel from a brusque, confused tomboy into a disciplined, dignified woman. This new self-control comes not from romance, but from the pain that she suffers during Leo's long period of self-degradation. Her love for him grows slowly, in spite of all the horror and anger she feels at his irresponsible behaviour. From this suffering stems her new dignity. Leo, gazing at her towards the end of the crisis, barely recognizes her:

> Er kannte sie und kannte sie doch nicht. - Die beherrschende Ruhe der Haltung, die wachende Sorge im Blick, die Leidensschatten auf den bräunlichen Wangen, das streng geschlossene, feste Lippenpaar - das alles erschien ihm neu an ihr.
>
> Er fühlte es wohl: gereift und gewachsen war sie mit seiner Not, wie er selbst verrottet und eingeschrumpft. (499)

On the whole, the Junker ladies in Sudermann's works are represented as dignified, industrious characters who work as hard as their menfolk. Though some appear as kindly, even maternal, and others as provincial snobs, the majority seem to be portrayed as possessing stern rectitude and a firm, wholly natural control over all they survey. The most striking figure in this category is, of course, that of Herta Prachwitz. Her tireless fascination with the working of a country estate, her kindly authority, fundamental conservatism and honour are all the most positive aspects of the type of Junker woman that appears in Sudermann's works.

The few characters that do not conform to the type in all respects still display a certain similarity. Elisabeth Weidemann's only breach of accepted Junker values (*Das Glück im Winkel*) is her marriage to a man of lower rank; in all other respects, she remains true to the type, being a deeply honourable woman, under whose benign influence Weidemann's farm and household blossom. The unconventionality of Alice (*Die indische Lilie*) and Beate von Kellingshausen (*Es lebe das Leben*) stems mainly from the fact that they have made their lives in the metropolis of Berlin and not upon their country estates. In the same way, the aristocratic heroine who makes much of her childhood friendship with a peasant boy (*Der Gänsehirt*) accepts at the end that the gulf between them is too wide, being one of the spirit as well as of birth. Melitta Sewitz (*Das deutsche Schicksal*) is born a "Landpomeranze", ill-at-ease in unfamiliar social situations, as when she meets a Jewish family. She is, however, soon transformed by the horrors of the war into an independent modern woman, unconcerned by the restrictions of bourgeois morality. It is this trauma that is primarily responsible for altering a strong, but otherwise conventional Junker woman.

Julia (*Die Lichtbänder*) and Felicitas (*Es War*) are the only two characters that truly differ from the type. Both show remarkable similarities in behaviour. They appear as shallow, essentially decadent types, intent on gratifying their egos by enslaving the men around them. Both are capable of immense charm; both are unhappy in their marriages with husbands who love but do not understand their natures. The lives of both women end in tragedy and scandal; Julia is murdered by her husband, while Felicitas becomes responsible for the death of her son and must leave home. While Julia is totally self-absorbed, Felicitas is still capable of mother-love, but this instinct is only too easily forgotten in the face of the all-consuming passion she feels for Leo. She easily deceives herself and others around her into believing that her urge to be close to Leo stems from their need for mutual repentance. For this reason Janet Hogarth accurately describes Felicitas as "deceiving always, but at times apparently self-deceived."[61] Both characters represent a type that appears in several works by Sudermann, i.e. woman as the purely physical principle, beautiful but destructive, obsessively narcissistic and quite amoral. In this category they stand out as exceptions, due to their rejection of traditional values. They represent the principle of egoism, not self-sacrifice and duty, the movement to change, not preservation.

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[61] Janet E. Hogarth, "Sudermann's Novels," *The Fortnightly Review*, 59 (1896), 662.

G. ARISTOCRATS IN TRADE

The aristocrats we see in this category are all involved in one way or another with a profession other than that of the army, farming or administration. Some go into trade by force of circumstances, e.g. Graf Trast (*Die Ehre*), others marry into merchant dynasties, e.g. Baron von Erfflingen (*Das Blumenboot*), and some exercise their talents for the fulfilment it brings, like Kurt von Seltzer (*Das höhere Leben*).

A close analysis of the works in question reveals that the actual fact of being an aristocrat involved in trade generally takes second place to the development of the individual against the background of a frivolous and materialistic high society. Their professional involvement forms only the background for the plot, but in itself plays little or no part in the action. This very lack of emphasis is significant. Whereas the Army exerts its control over every moment of an officer's public and private life, and whereas the love of the land lends the Junker his stability, the aristocrat in Sudermann's works who has a profession is generally depicted as drifting free and rootless.

Sudermann rarely provides details of their business lives; these aristocrats function in his plays and novels basically upon the financial independence that their profession lends them. They always appear as very well-to-do, and this economic security combined with the freedom from the restraints of provincial mores or Army discipline results in a preponderance of *Raisonneur* and social butterfly types. Sudermann's position as a moralist and social critic is never clearer than in this category of aristocrats and trade.[62]

THE MAJOR CHARACTERS

1. Graf Trast (*Die Ehre*, 1889)
2. Baron von Erfflingen (*Das Blumenboot*, 1905)
3. Baronin von Erfflingen (*Das Blumenboot*)
3. Herr von Karlstadt (*Die leidende Dritte*, 1911)
4. Maria von Karlstadt(*Die leidende Dritte*)
5. Baron von Tanna (*Der gute Ruf*, 1912)
7. Dorrit von Tanna (*Der gute Ruf*)
8. Kurt von Seltzer (*Das höhere Leben*, 1915)

Die Ehre (1889)

A *Raisonneur* and observer of this high society at its most hypocritical is Graf Trast, the coffee magnate, who has succeeded in life in spite of his dishonourable discharge from the Army. Most of Trast's airy superiority is, as we see, based upon his financial power that protects him from a good many unpleasant situations. As Mainland puts it:

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[62] As Leo Berg points out: 'Die Triebfeder Sudermanns ist seine Ehrlichkeit. [...] Daher jener moralisierende Ton, jene republikanische Strenge in seinen Dichtungen, und zuweilen sogar ein Stück Ungerechtigkeit'.(Leo Berg, p. 207).

> He has come back as a coffee-king, with enormous wealth. He is *not* outside the structure of his society, any more than Sudermann really was. He can be sure of a hearing, because money talks ... [63]

Though he moves within this world, he is nevertheless not subject to any traditional system of values. He is able to follow his personal code of honour only because he is essentially free of his society. His self-confidence would be highly improbable in an equally disgraced but impoverished aristocrat. His wealth thus provides him with an elevated platform from which he has the freedom and the leisure to observe society's antics. The emphasis on Trast's *Raisonneur* character is thus not only on his financial security but also on his fundamental rootlessness.

The same traits appear in Sudermann's other works; the aristocrats involved in a trade tend to run to two basic types, the *Raisonneur* and the social butterfly.

Das Blumenboot (1905)

The world of elegant society in this play is portrayed as a sham, empty of integrity and self-respect. The characters of the von Erfflingen couple, members of the Hoyer merchant dynasty are classic examples of the decadence that Sudermann attacks. The flower-laden boats that are popular at the von Erfflingen balls are symbolic of the frivolity and extravagance that are the norm. Baron von Erfflingen is depicted as a weak, dissipated parasite, content to live off the wealth of his wife's family. Having married into the rich Hoyer clan, he leads his own life, which is dedicated to gambling and similar pursuits. Since his wife has identical tastes in luxury and dissipation, their relationship is perfectly amiable. It is a measure of these changing values that Thea and Fred are amused rather than offended by the Baron's lack of integrity and can accept the Baroness's promiscuity with a certain degree of admiration. The contrast between this world and the disciplined, stable sphere of the Junker is especially plain in the conversation that Graf Sperner holds with the feckless Thea, a product of her glamorous but shallow society. The piety and ancient dignity of Sperner's Junker family are as alien to Thea as her questions on the rights of the individual are to Sperner. His answer to these questions demonstrates the gulf that lies between them in terms of duty and self-sacrifice:

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[63] William F. Mainland, "Hermann Sudermann", in *German Men of Letters* (London: Oswald Wolff, 1963), p. 40.

> Ach, meine teuerste Thea, das sind so anjelesene Sachen, nicht wahr? Es gibt doch wirklich kein schöneres Recht des Weibes, als zu dienen. Sie werden in die Geschichte meines Hauses eine Reihe wahrhaft edler Frauengestalten finden, die Ihnen vorbildlich sein können. Da war zum Beispiel Gisberta von Sperner, die hatte sieben Söhne. (387-388)

To Thea, bred in her mother's world of extravagant balls and casual affairs, a world in which nothing is sacred, the austere discipline that Sperner represents is totally foreign. Nothing is real to her; nothing is lasting. For Low, Thea "is emphatically a child of her age; young though she is, in feelings she is a mature woman; she is without a sense of either religion or duty, she is desirous of knowing all and experiencing all."[44]

Thea's values are based on luxury and ostentation, whereas Sperner has been bred to think of the welfare of his family and his estates as paramount. Thus while he speaks of implementing drainage and building projects after their marriage, she is interested only in creating an extravagant country residence:

> Da sind Plätze, nicht wahr? Da könnte man Rundtempel bauen und Säulenhallen anlegen wie draussen bei Mama? (387)

Thus the author contrasts the glittering superficiality of Thea's society to the discipline and self-sacrifice demanded by Junker life; for Thea, such decorative trappings are a necessity, but for Sperner, they are meaningless, compared to his duty to preserve his heritage.

Die leidende Dritte (1911)

In this study of upper-class sexual mores, the central figure is an ennobled tycoon, wealthy enough to indulge his whims with the approval of society. When his wife, wishing only to please him, invites his mistress to a dinner, the resulting scandal and his own anger drive them apart.

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[44] Florence B. Low, "The Sudermann Cycle," *The Nineteenth Century*, 60 (1906), 665.

Illness and suffering reduce Mara von Karlstadt to an invalid, while her husband loses his mistress to a more prosperous rival. The couple meet again at Mara's deathbed, and recognize for the first time the magnitude of their error. In this story, Sudermann pillories the casual attitude of high society towards love and personal responsibility. The promiscuity that destroys the von Karlstadts is symptomatic of a decadent elite that tacitly encourages such behaviour. A frequent theme in this category of aristocrats is the suffering or the destruction of those characters who possess natural integrity and who are lost in this world without stable values, such as Raffaela (*Das Blumenboot*).

Hypocrisy is yet another theme. For Sudermann, this society will accept any amount of license provided no scandal ensues. Describing Frau Wormser's (*Die leidende Dritte*) relationship with her husband's mistress, Sudermann writes:

> Diese Frau war von so hohen gesellschaftlichen Idealen getragen, dass sie eine unstandesgemässe Liaison ihres Gatten als eine Beleidigung des allgemeinen und des eigenen guten Geschmacks niemals verziehen haben würde. Madame Nelson hingegen fand ihren vollen Beifall. Sie genoss sie als den prunkvollsten Schmuck, der für das eheliche Heim zurzeit zu haben war. Figürlich gesprochen, natürlich ... Oh! Es ging alles in korrektesten Formen zu ... Man streifte einander bei grossen Wohltätigkeitsfesten mit einem wohlwollenden Blicke und sorgte dafür, dass man nicht nach gleichen Modellen gekleidet war.[65]

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[65] Hermann Sudermann, *Die leidende Dritte*, in *Romane und Novellen*, IV (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1930), 269.

Frau Wormser represents the values of a society that insists upon the strict observance of form; its superficiality in the long run causes its members to feel that infidelity is the norm. Normal human impulses are distorted to such a degree that virtue appears amusing, jealousy an example of ill-breeding and fidelity synonymous with folly.

Der gute Ruf (1912)

The figure of von Tanna possesses the characteristics of both the *Raisonneur* and the social butterfly. He has much in common with Trast in terms of detachment and wit, but he lacks the latter's fundamental integrity. Tanna too is forced to enter a business firm when his father-in-law loses all his wealth, but, unlike Trast, he looks upon it as below his dignity, even while he discharges his duties faithfully. A supreme egoist, coldly cynical, he is always intent upon extracting the maximum benefit out of every situation for himself. The feelings and virtues of others are unimportant to him. A perfect product of his society, his intelligence and detachment are not balanced by either kindness or the ability to recognize it. His lack of interest in his impoverished wife is more hurtful to a proud, acutely sensitive character like Dorrit than outright brutality.

As a type, von Tanna stands between the two groups. His cool wit and intelligence place him in the *Raisonneur* category, but his boundless egoism and lack of compassion rank him with the second type. He reflects his society in that he has no interest in the old-fashioned concept of honour, unless he stands to gain from it. As his wife Dorrit says bitterly to Max:

> Lieber Max, mein Mann ist der gerissenste Kenner, dem Sie je begegnet sind ... der guckt uns durch und durch. Wenn der glaubte, dass sich irgendwas für ihn 'rausschlagen liesse, dann hätt' er Sie schon längst gestellt. Aber wegen gar nichts, und noch dazu 'n paar Monat Festung - da lohnt es ihm nicht.‘‘

This attitude demonstrates in itself the fluidity of changing values, moral and social, of those aristocrats whose independence allows them to exist free of the psychological stability, however constricting, of Army and Junker life.

The empty sham of this society, with its meaningless flirtations and lack of fulfilment, is compared to the spirit of the new age as represented by the intelligent, harmonious personality of Anna Söhnlin. Against her transparent honesty, the artificial coquetry of Dorrit and Karla is revealed as cheap and tawdry. As Dorrit says:

> ... Ich glaube, jenes Mädelchen hat uns toll gemacht. Neid, Neid, Neid! Neid - nicht bloss wegen - , Neid auf eine andere neue, starke Art vom Leben! 'raus aus dem öden sich-Grämen! - 'raus aus dem noch zehnmal öderen Flirt! Denn was anderes hatten wir ja bis dahin nicht gekannt ... (188-189)

‘‘Hermann Sudermann, *Der gute Ruf*, in *Dramatische Werke*, V (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1923), 156.

Das höhere Leben (1915)

Similar social criticism is to be found in this satire on Berlin society. The *Raisonneur* figure here is that of Kurt von Seltzer, through whose sardonic gaze we observe Berlin upper-class society and the fluctuating social mores of the period. The theme here is again not the business that von Seltzer is involved in but rather the lack of integrity in modern society. Sudermann satirizes those wastrels and parasites on society who excuse their amorality and egoism with the statement that they represent a higher stage of spiritual development, in which the individual is entitled to use and discard whatever it requires to further its growth. Lola is one of these parasites, a woman who manipulates those who love her without compunction.

Links to *Die Ehre* abound in this play. Kurt recognizes Lola for what she is: an adventuress who has married his friend not out of love, but out of self-interest. In a speech that reminds one of Trast's conversation with the young officers, he describes the methods such women in society employ to ensnare their victims:

> Auch nicht so leicht zu sagen, denn ihre Tricks sind wie Sand am Meer. Die einen sinken in süsse Wehmut - die anderen machen's mit der Seelengrösse, die dritten - mit dem Bacchantentum ... Aber alle verstehen sie, uns das höhere Leben vorzugaukeln, nach dem wir uns die Augen blind suchen und das wir dann todsicher an ihrer Seite führen werden, das Leben der Passion - das Leben des ewigen Rausches. Und was wir schliesslich finden, ist nichts wie - ein lebenslanger Kater.[7]

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[7] Hermann Sudermann, *Das höhere Leben*, in *Dramatische Werke*, V (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1923), 478.

Like Trast with Lenore, von Seltzer instinctively treats with respect women like Ernestine who behave naturally and with dignity. His frankly sexual innuendoes are reserved for women such as Lola and Adelaide whom he recognizes as equally ready to exploit masculine weaknesses to the utmost. For him they are parasites, living off the bourgeoisie they profess to despise:

> Ja, meine verehrten Damen, das ist eigentlich ein ganz besonderer Typ ... Gezüchtet von - ja, von was? ... Von der Frauenbewegung *gezüchtet* kann man nicht sagen ... 'n Parasit. Ja ... Der schmarotzt nu an unserer Zeit so 'rum ... (476-477)

As a *Raisonneur*, von Seltzer falls into the same group as Trast. As mentioned, his profession and his view of it are unimportant in Sudermann's portrayal; the emphasis is upon his relationship to the changing values of his society.

It is significant that the characters who survive the ravages of this society with their integrity intact are those who either distance themselves or opt for the discipline of the work ethic. Trast runs a coffee empire, Kurt von Seltzer returns to his painting and studies the priestesses of a higher life with a clinical eye, Fred takes over the Hoyer business with Thea's help and Dorrit von Tanna retreats into the comfort of temporary obscurity. The tragic cases are those who ignore the impulses of honesty and yield to the pressures of society, e.g. Raffaela, thrust (like Fritzchen) against her will and nature into alien modes of behaviour.[44]

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[44] Walter Kauermann, *Das Vererbungsproblem im Drama des Naturalismus* Diss. (Kiel: Heinrich Pöppinghaus o. H.-G.,

Their purity is meaningless in a world that ignores it as outdated. In Dorrit's words:

> Sehen Sie sich doch mal die Frauen unserer sogenannten Gesellschaft an! Kaum eine ruht, ehe sie nicht ihren kleinen Stich weg hat ... Treue Gattin, gute Mutter - um Gottes willen! Das macht die Portiersfrau auch ... Die eine ist schon glücklich, wenn man von ihr sagen kann: "Die ist eine grosse Flirt," - die andere, wenn man von einer wechselvollen Vergangenheit munkelt, die dritte will eine frevlerische Leidenschaft - etwa zu einem Schwager oder so - Schwager ist sehr beliebt - siegreich überstanden haben, - und wenn sie *gar* nichts erlebt hat, dann muss sie wenigstens in einem Nervensanatorium gewesen sein ... Nur einen einzigen wirklich schlechten Ruf gibt es: das ist der gute Ruf ... (156-157)

Thea's answer to Raffaela's remarks on love is the final analysis of the essential coldness of her society. Love, she says, is not for them:

> Für uns nicht, mein Süsses. Mach dir keine Illusionen. Unsere Herzen, die sind zu sehr aufs Geniessen dressiert. Die können gar nicht so stark empfinden. (368)

In this analysis, we see that the category of aristocrats in trade is usually portrayed against the background of hedonistic Berlin society. Dedicated solely to pleasure, this elite is restrained in its amorality only by its fear of scandal. The rootlessness of these aristocrats is the main theme in this group. Their wealth not only lends them freedom, but sets them adrift from traditions of honour, duty and responsibility. Unlike the Junkers or the officers, they owe allegiance only to themselves and their own pleasures. Such detachment from the strictest institutions of society may be seen in the number of

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''(cont'd)1933), p. 84.

Raisonneur figures in this group. On the whole, the aristocrats involved in trade in Sudermann's works appear more witty and sophisticated, but far less vigorous than the other categories studied. They are the natural reflection of their society and thus follow its behaviour patterns. Their essential detachment, however, creates an image which is not as positive as that of the Junkers.

SUMMARY

In conclusion, we may say that the aristocrats in Sudermann's works, though at times reminiscent of Sardou and Marlitt,‘’ are, on the whole, portrayed without any bias. The criticism that does appear tends to be directed against the society that actively encourages aristocratic frivolity or arrogance. The author appears to concentrate less upon the actual social or economic problems specific to this class than upon the fate of individuals. He seems to see them as human beings, and not so much as representatives of a specific caste. Their personalities concern him, their problems in dealing with a society that expects them to conform in all respects, even in triviality. Sudermann's aristocrats are people, first and foremost, living creatures who must work out their own salvation and their own solutions to life's problems. They do not fashion society,

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‘’Paul Goldmann, *Die neue Richtung. Polemische Aufsätze über Berliner Theater-Aufführungen* (Wien: C.B. Stern, 1903), p. 123.

but are fashioned by it without mercy; they are not oppressors, but fellow victims, imprisoned in their own elaborate fortress, holding fast to dying traditions while the world around them moves on, unheeding.

III. THE PASTORS

An analysis of the pastor figures in the various dramas and novels of Sudermann reveals the influence of contemporary intellectual, spiritual and philosophical trends, closely intertwined with Sudermann's own portrayal of the Christian faith and its problematic position in modern society. There are six major pastor characters in his works, who, while not being the focus of attention, nevertheless play an essential role in the development of the plot. Two of them appear in novels; the others in plays. The first two are remarkably alike in their militant faith; the others are also similar in demonstrating tolerance, kindness and a naive trust.

A. THE MAJOR CHARACTERS

1. Pastor Götz (*Der Katzensteg*, 1889)
2. Pfarrer Heffterdingk (*Heimat*, 1893)
3. Pastor Brenckenberg (*Es War*, 1894)
4. Superintendant Fürbringer (*Es War*)
5. Pfarrer Haffke (*Johannisfeuer*, 1900)
6. Pastor Schilling (*Die Freundin*, 1915)

Der Katzensteg (1889)

As the sole negative pastor figure of importance in Sudermann's works, Pastor Götz serves as an early role model for Sudermann's flirtation with the concept of the individual pitted against an inimical society. Götz represents in part this herd instinct and, as such, is the most negative pastor type created by the author. A country priest, he personifies the danger implicit in excessive patriotism at times of war.

In the novel *Der Katzensteg*, the Junker Boleslav von Schranden returns to his ruined castle after the Wars of Liberation to assume his heritage. The main obstacle to rehabilitating his disgraced name is his old tutor, Pastor Götz. Like Brenckenberg in *Es War*, Götz rules like a despot over his peasant flock. They fear and respect his authority, and his implacability provides most of the dramatic tension in the novel since the villagers are encouraged to much of their lynch-mob behaviour by his tacit approval.

It is plain from the outset that Götz is not intended as a positive figure. Though certain virtues are undeniable, such as his mercy towards the defeated French, there is much in his character and reasoning that is reminiscent of the deadly logic of Torquemada. For Landsberg, he is less a Christian priest than a "Prophet des alten Bundes."[1] For Henri Schoen as well, he is the:

> pasteur orthodoxe et farouche qui, semblable aux prophètes de l'Ancien Testament, lance ses foudres

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[1] Hans Landsberg, *Hermann Sudermann*, p. 33.

> contre les pécheurs et contre ceux qu'il croit tels [...].[2]

A great deal of this inborn ferocity appears in the first meeting between Boleslav and the pastor. Götz is described here as a violent, stubborn man, ready to chastise his peasants physically if necessary. There is nothing of Christian love or compassion in his first appearance:

> Mit einem schweren Knotenstock in der Faust erschien er in der Veranda. Sein weisses Haar flatterte ihm um die hochgewölbten Schläfen. Die Habichtsnase blähte ihre Nüstern, als witterte sie Kampf und Totschlag. - Unter den schneeweissen Brauen, die sich wie zwei halbzerfaserte Pinsel nach vorn streckten, glühten die Augen gleich Feuerbränden. (71)

Even the name Götz is significant for two reasons: firstly, since the old pastor's behaviour resembles not the gentle message of Christianity, but rather of older, far more brutal idolatry, and secondly, because Götz appears to have substituted the worship of Prussian nationalism during the War of Liberation for the service of the Church which is his duty. Sudermann depicts him as a martial character with a propensity for physical courage and violent action, not content to be a mere spectator while his nation goes to war against the hated French conquerors:

> Das war der alte Pfarrer Götz, der im März des Jahres 1813, mit dem Altarkreuze in der Hand und einem Trommler hinter sich, von Haus zu Haus gezogen war, um die Schrandener zum heiligen Kampfe aufzurufen. Und wäre er auf dem Marsche nach Königsberg nicht ohnmächtig liegen geblieben, wer weiss, ob er die Wehrmänner seines Sprengels nicht auch ins Feld begleitet hätte! (71)

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[2] Henri Schoen, *Hermann Sudermann* (Paris: Henri Didier, 1904), p. 120.

Der Katzensteg is a novel that deals partly with the dangers of the exaggerated nationalism that Götz is guilty of. In his obsessive hatred of the Schranden name, he even rejects Boleslav, a war veteran who fought for Prussia, as tainted by treacherous stock.

Thus in this early work it is already possible to discern Sudermann's tendency to portray his pastors primarily in their complex relationship to society. They tend to become entangled in the conflict between their duty as Churchmen to preserve and protect their heritage and the irresistible undertow of fluctuating social values and problems. Some resist the thought of change, some adjust with grace and compassion and others, like Götz, reflect the social turbulence of their day in every word and deed. Götz has not withdrawn from these troubled times, or attempted to maintain the orderly patterns of his existence within his Church and his parish. He has over-adapted to the turmoil around him, forgetting his duty to the faith he serves. Symbolic of his new allegiances is the description of his study, where, instead of religious images, "Pallasche und Feuergewehre" (72) lean against the walls.

Whatever is revealed about Götz's life before the war appears no less negative, if only hinted at. It is especially his attitude to the class structure that calls into question his personal integrity. He treats the peasants as inferior beings, referring to them as "Schwefelbande", and accepts the supremacy of the aristocracy without hesitation. We are told that Schranden's brutality had terrified the peasants for years before the war began; Götz as a pastor caring for his flock could hardly have been unaware of this inhumanity. Yet he admits to Boleslav that the Junker had been his personal friend before his betrayal of Prussian troops to the French. Only after Schranden's treachery does Götz formally extinguish his name from the Church rolls of the living:

> "Mit diesen Kreuzen," fuhr der Pfarrer fort, "hab' ich vor sieben Jahren den Mann begraben, der trotz seiner Grausamkeiten und wilden Gelüste bis dahin mein Freund gewesen war. Und wer mir noch seinen Namen aussprach, den jagte ich selbigen Augenblicks aus meinem Hause." (74)

Thus, by his own admission, Schranden's viciousness, his economic and sexual exploitation of his people, did not interfere with their friendship; it was his single act of betrayal that Götz cannot accept. As he says to Boleslav:

> An allen will ich Milde üben, nur an deinem Vater nicht! Denn wer sich an seinem Vaterlande versündigt, der schändet alle irdischen und himmlischen Gesetze, der schändet die Mutter, die ihn geboren hat, und verfemt die Kinder, die er erzeugt. Den soll man hinausstäupen aus aller menschlichen Gesellschaft, denn er ist wie der Aussätzige - Tod und Verderben bringt er mit sich, wohin er tritt. (76)

The pastor also blames Schranden's treachery for the bestial condition of the villagers, who, deprived of self-respect by the disgrace brought upon them, have lost all order and dignity as well. He chooses to ignore the fact that this disintegration began long before the night at the Katzensteg, and was caused not merely by Schranden's disloyalty, but also by his degradation of his peasants. The hypocrisy of this attitude is described by Oakes as "the emptiness and mockery of the Pfarrer's pretended high ethical theory as it is applied to the practical affairs of life."[3] Many omissions on his part remain unexplained - the way he tolerates the manner in which the local drunkard sells his fifteen-year-old daughter to Schranden, his silence while Regina is tormented by the villagers, and his tacit approval of the arson that destroys Castle Schranden.

The main theme of *Der Katzensteg* is the battle of the strong individual against the pressures of traditional society. The characters of Regina and Pastor Götz represent this bitter conflict. Throughout the novel, the pastor's fanaticism is contrasted to the greatness of Regina's spirit. As concubine and slave, she is shut out from virtuous Christian society and treated like a dangerous criminal by the Schrandeners. Her courage and loyalty find no understanding among bigots like Götz.

A strong motif of pagan symbolism pulses through the novel in rejection of the fanaticism and cruelty that Götz and the villagers represent. The concepts of guilt and sin integral to Christianity are purged here in Sudermann's Nietzschean vision of untroubled harmony and strength. It is no coincidence that Boleslav's first glimpse of Regina occurs in the castle grounds, where she is surrounded by the fragmented statue of the goddess Diana. In stature and character traits she is frequently compared to the concepts of pagan antiquity. The comparison is continued throughout the work, with Regina's essential splendour favourably contrasted to Götz's hatred. Abused and exploited from childhood, she still retains the integrity of mind and soul that Helene Götz, brought up in the most claustrophobic of petty bourgeois traditions, has lost. Appropriately enough, Helene is always associated in Boleslav's mind with the Virgin Mary, a different goddess of chastity, and an essential symbol of Christian sexual attitudes. Regina, on the other hand, appears for the first time under the aegis of pagan Diana, and is buried by Boleslav with the head of the statue as her gravestone. Even Boleslav's destruction of Regina's utensils so that no one may use them after her death has distinct overtones of pagan funeral rites. His rejection, not of the Christian faith, but of the bigotry represented by men like Götz, culminates in his refusal to consider Christian burial for Regina.[4]

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[3] Francis Coram Oakes, "Autobiographical Elements in Hermann Sudermann's Novels," Diss. University of Chicago, 1924, p. 35.

In summing up, we see that Götz is depicted as a powerful, fanatic character, who has not only accepted the social ferment of his time but has whole-heartedly plunged into secular strife, absorbing all the worst trends in the society around him. He is the only pastor type who does not face his rapidly changing world with the qualities of suspicion, alienation or resignation. He has himself corrupted and destroyed his faith by abandoning its basic precepts of charity and compassion for the dangerous euphoria of patriotism. By submerging himself totally into society and accepting all its biases, he has lost the essential quality of objectivity which is required for a man of the Church who must serve a higher cause. As the sole negative pastor type in Sudermann's works, Götz fits into the typical Sudermann pattern of confronting his churchmen, directly or indirectly, with the urgent problem of adjusting to an increasingly complex society.

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[4] In the later stage version of the novel (1916), Sudermann altered the ending to permit this, but the play is a weak effort, and lacks the youthful vigour and defiance of the original work.

Heimat (1893)

Pastor Heffterdingk, in the famous and controversial play *Heimat*, is Sudermann's most prominent figure in this category. He plays an essential role in this work, intervening as he does at every crucial point to spur the action on to its conclusion. As a type, Heffterdingk belongs to the category of kindly, temperate pastors with tolerant, if not precisely liberal tendencies. His character, like that of Fürbringer, is tranquil and exercises a comforting influence upon his parishioners. Indeed his entire demeanour is one that inspires the absolute trust of the people in his care.

The importance of Heffterdingk in this play has been thoroughly underrated by critics in general, who see in him yet another of the many minor provincial types that Magda comes into conflict with upon her return to her hometown. We see, however, that he enjoys almost as much preeminence as Magda herself; in point of fact his name and the great influence he wields in this town are clearly and unmistakably detailed long before Magda is even mentioned. In the Schwartze household his authority is equal to that of the old colonel himself. It is Heffterdingk whom Marie quotes when she is undecided about a course of action; it is Heffterdingk she intends to turn to for assistance in her marriage plans; it is Heffterdingk again who has rehabilitated Schwartze after his stroke and eliminated the tension between Marie and her stepmother.

The basic interpretation of the pastor's character to the present day has been superficial, concentrating rather on the clash of old and new systems of values as represented by Schwartze and Magda, the two antagonists. However, Sudermann creates not merely two poles, but a triangle of conflict in *Heimat*, with Pastor Heffterdingk as the fulcrum between the flamboyant, temperamental prima donna and her tyrannical father. The action depends at every turn upon his intervention or his existence. Heffterdingk was the reason that Schwartze ordered Magda out of his home, thus setting her on the way to fame; it is Heffterdingk again who persuades her, despite her misgivings, to stay at her old home instead of at a hotel; and ultimately, it is he who breaks down her resistance to a marriage with Keller, thus bringing on the final catastrophe.

Heffterdingk's character is contrasted not only to the inflexible conservatism of Schwartze, but also to the passionate, hard-won individualism represented by Magda. In this contrast, it is clear that while he is obviously superior in every sense to the old colonel, he actually faces Magda upon more or less equal terms. Both have reached a preeminent position in their chosen careers; both have sacrificed precious qualities in their characters to achieve their present superiority. Magda, for example, has divested herself of the tolerance and familial roots required for the maturing of the individual; in a profession that places few restrictions upon egocentric behaviour, only her natural warm generosity saves her from the tyranny of her father. Indeed one suspects that the love-hate relationship between father and daughter is based not on their differences, but rather upon their identical attitudes to life. It is her father's inflexibility that echoes in Magda's words:

> ... Ich mich ducken! Das bin ich nicht gewohnt. Denn in mir steckt ein Hang zum Morden - zum Niedersingen. - Ich singe so, oder ich lebe so, denn beides ist ein und dasselbe - dass jeder Mensch wollen muss wie ich. Ich zwing' ihn, ich kneble ihn, dass er liebt und leidet und jauchzt und schluchzt wie ich. Und wehe dem, der sich da wehren will! Niedersingen - in Grund und Boden singen, bis er ein Sklave, ein Spielzeug wird in meiner Hand. (306)

Heffterdingk admits as well that in order to achieve the serenity that his parishioners admire, he has had to suppress the more spontaneous instincts of his nature. The private passion he would have dedicated to Magda has been transformed into an all-encompassing, peaceful love for troubled humanity. This peace, however, has little to do with happiness; Heffterdingk's emotional life is sterile in its serenity. Measured against Magda's blazing vitality, he appears to himself as a worthy but colourless personality, without that precious spark of individual egoism which would make him whole. As he says to Magda:

> Ja - ich - habe - vieles - abtöten müssen in mir - in meiner Seele. Mein Frieden, der ist wie der eines Leichnams. Und wie Sie gestern vor mir standen in Ihrer Ursprünglichkeit, Ihrer naiven Kraft, Ihrer - Ihrer Grösse, da sagt' ich zu mir: Das ist das, was du vielleicht hättest werden können, wenn zur rechten Zeit die Freude in dein Leben getreten wäre.
>
> (307)

By eliminating passion from his life, Heffterdingk has sacrificed that part of him that is essentially human and vulnerable, which must confront sin and overcome it in order to grow into wisdom. This attitude is compared to Magda's unchristian claim that guilt and sin are necessary, a theme also touched upon in *Es War*:

> Schuldig müssen wir werden, wenn wir wachsen wollen. Grösser werden als unsre Sünde, das ist mehr wert als die Reinheit, die ihr predigt. (307)

In *Heimat*, Pastor Heffterdingk confronts not only the spirit of a new, rebellious age as personified by Magda Schwartze, but also the spirit of conservatism as represented by her father. He himself appears "as a mediating principle"[5] between these two extreme positions. He stands for the temperate virtues of charity and tolerance, whereas Schwartze's patriarchal tyranny is obviously outdated and Magda's egoism potentially destructive. As Paul Fechter puts it:

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[5] James G. Huneker, *Iconoclasts. A Book of Dramatists* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905), p. 291.

> ... Sudermann hat bei aller Sympathie für seine freiheitssüchtige Heldin doch die Einsicht, dass niemand nur um seiner selbst willen da ist und dass die Ordnung, aus der das Individuum sich allzu selbstherrlich löst, sich eines Tages rächt, rächen muss, sobald der Verwegene die Isolierung aufgibt und sich zum Teilnehmen an der verlorenen Heimat verleiten lässt.[6]

Heffterdingk represents the virtue of moderation; the influence that he exerts over the people around him, even the inflexible prima donna, stems from his striking combination of traditional virtues and modern liberalism. Kirchner's review of *Heimat* echoes this when he describes the pastor as a man who "bei aller Frömmigkeit auch für Regungen ausserhalb seines Kreises Mitgefühl und Verständnis hat."[7]

Criticism of Heffterdingk's position and values in the play is not lacking. Adolf Zucker's original view that Sudermann intended Heffterdingk as an Ibsenian villain on the lines of Pastor Manders in *Ghosts* does not stand up under close scrutiny and has also been rejected by more recent criticism. By Zucker's own definition, the Ibsenian villains are well-meaning people who cause catastrophes by insisting upon strict adherence to outdated moral attitudes. Heffterdingk to him is the true villain in *Heimat*:

> ... he is an Ibsenian villain, i.e., an idealist or

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[6] Paul Fechter, *Das europäische Drama. Vom Naturalismus bis Expressionismus*, II (Mannheim: Bibliographisches Institut A.G., 1957), 85.

[7] Friedrich Kirchner, *Gründeutschland. Ein Streifzug durch die jüngste deutsche Dichtung*, p. 192.

> upholder of the current ideals, as Bernard Shaw calls this type of character. By preaching and insisting upon outworn truths or slogans, such men as Manders and Heffterdingk are the real mischief-makers who bring on catastrophes.[8]

In the actual character-analysis, however, we see that one cannot compare Manders and Heffterdingk on one crucial point. Manders chooses not to rescue Frau Alving primarily out of an insistence upon Christian morality and also his fear of scandal. His personal weakness decides the tragic outcome of the play. In *Heimat*, however, the tragedy rests in the inflexibility of Magda and her father, both totally committed to what they believe in. It is the stubborn "Kompromisslosigkeit der beiden Standpunkte"[9] that leads to the final disaster. Colonel Schwartze thrusts marriage upon his daughter because he can do nothing else; as an officer, his breeding, education and profession have welded him into a cage of rigid norms which he cannot alter. In the same way, Magda can do nothing else but break free; she is helpless under the dictates of a character that is as unyielding in its mother-love as her father is in his petty tyranny.

Unlike Manders, Heffterdingk pleads with Magda to stay with her family because he conceives it to be his duty to prevent the pain she would otherwise cause by choosing to live in a hotel. In the same way, it is his concept of duty, rather than self-interest or Christian morality, that leads him to point out to her the consequences of a refusal to comply with her father's demand for her marriage. Zucker feels that this so-called dogmatic inhuman demand is followed by "sentimental arguments."[10] However, the text proves the opposite. Heffterdingk's own pain is visible in every word; his arguments are not sentimental but factual and, given the social environment of the period, absolutely accurate. He refers to the destruction that Magda's rejection of Keller would cause, e.g. Schwartze's probable death in the inevitable duel, scandal and ruin for the entire family, spinsterhood for Marie, etc. Manders persuades Frau Alving to return to her husband because he lacks the courage to endanger his position; Heffterdingk, on the other hand, deliberately sacrifices his love for Magda because he feels it his duty as pastor to save her family from certain disaster. In a moment of crisis, Manders is motivated by the wrong reasons; Heffterdingk, however, puts the welfare of the family and community over not only morality, but the wishes of individuals such as Magda and himself. This sentimental importance of the family in the Naturalist drama has already been pointed out by Gerhard Kluge, when he says:

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[8] Adolf Zucker, "The Ibsenian Villain in Sudermann's *Heimat*," *The Germanic Review*, 3 (1928), 216.

[9] E.H. Bleich, *Der Bote aus der Fremde als formbedingender Kompositionsfaktor im Drama des deutschen Naturalismus*, p. 99.

> Die Familie wird zum Gefühlswert, identifiziert mit "Heimat" (Sudermann) oder "Mutter Erde" (Halbe), womit nicht die Scholle oder die durch die Stammeszugehörigkeit des einzelnen bedingte Gemeinschaft gemeint ist, sondern der durch Kindheitserlebnisse und- erinnerung vorgegebene

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[10] Adolf Zucker, p. 217.

> Familienraum des Geborgenen.[11]

Outdated moral concepts have nothing to do with Heffterdingk's decision. He does not condemn Magda for her liaison with Keller or her illegitimate child. When she asks him if he despises her, his answer is unequivocal:

> Ach, Fräulein Magda, das Verachten hab' ich mir schon lange abgewöhnt. - Wir sind alle arme Schächer. (331)

These words also indicate that Lou Andreas-Salome's view that Heffterdingk as a man and as a priest "empört sich gegen Magdas Schuld ..."[12] is incorrect.

Zucker's description of this pastor as an Ibsenian villain is thus only a superficial analysis that does not take into account Heffterdingk's refusal to act by traditional Christian morality, choosing instead to address himself to the practical facts of the situation. In the most recent interpretation, Fitzell rejects Zucker's interpretation as well, emphasizing the honesty of Heffterdingk's intentions:

> Heffterdingk ist nicht der "Ibsen'sche Bösewicht", den Zucker aus ihm machte. Er wird aufrichtig durch Liebe zu Magda *und* den Ihrigen motiviert.[13]

And Sigismund Friedmann confirms Fitzell's view of Heffterdingk, pointing out that:

> Pastor Heffterdingk ist eine reine Idealfigur. Er

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[11] Gerhard Kluge, "Das verfehlte Soziale. Sentimentalität und Gefühlskitsch im Drama des deutsche Naturalismus," *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*, 96 (1977), 230-31.

[12] Lou Andreas-Salome, "Ibsen, Strindberg, Sudermann", *Freie Bühne für modernes Leben*, 1 (1893), 153.

[13] John Fitzell, "Hermann Sudermann: Feuer- und Wassermotivik im dramatischen Werk," in *Hermann Sudermann. Werk und Wirkung*, p. 164.

> erinnert zwar durch seine Rolle im Drama und durch die Liebe zu Magda, der er hat entsagen müssen, an den Pastor Manders in Ibsens *Gespenstern*; er hat aber vor diesem den Vorteil voraus, dass er die evangelische Gesinnung im vollsten Lichte darstellt, während Manders mit seinen blossen guten Absichten und geringem Verstand nur zu einer Fratze wird.[14]

These two pastors are similar perhaps only in their exaggeratedly naive trust in the good instincts of humanity and Spielhagen detects this naivety, even folly, when he criticizes the pastor for telling Schwartze that Magda herself will confess all, thus overstepping his authority as priest.[15]

An interesting point about this pastor character is the discussion, for the first time, of the pros and cons of the priesthood as a profession. Sudermann's portrayal is even-handed; in contrasting Heffterdingk to the mutinous spirit of the new times, he also shows the problems involved in this calling. Heffterdingk's attitude to Magda's unorthodox ideas is significantly one of hesitant admiration. In her independence, he sees what he might have been if he too had given the demands of his personality full rein instead of devoting himself to the welfare of others. His profession, however, sees self-fulfilment in self-abnegation, and true happiness in alleviating the suffering of others. Speaking about his work, he says:

> ... Aber wenn man ihn recht ernst nimmt, so lebt man kein eignes Leben dabei - wenigstens ich kann es nicht ... Man kann nicht so aufjubeln im Vollgefühl

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[14] Sigismund Friedmann, *Das deutsche Drama des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts in seinen Hauptvertretern*, p. 347.
[15] Friedrich Spielhagen, *Neue Beiträge zur Theorie und Technik der Epik und Dramatik*, p. 338.

> seiner Persönlichkeit - so meinen Sie es doch? ...
> Und dann - ich blicke in mancherlei Herzen hinein -
> und man sieht da zu viel Wunden, die man nicht
> heilen kann, um jemals recht froh zu werden. (288)

But though Heffterdingk recognizes the psychological restrictions placed upon him by his profession, he also realizes the dangers of Magda's obsessive independence of all authority. For him the sole guideline in his actions appears to be not traditional Christian morality, but rather the secular concept of duty to one's family, community and nation. It is not coincidental that the only occasion on which he drops his mild manner for a harsh tone is when he addresses Magda on the responsibility she has to save her family from social ruin.

In summing up, we see that Pastor Heffterdingk is clearly one of Sudermann's most positive pastor types. His tolerance and serenity combine to create a character well suited to make the transition from the old to the new age, his integrity untouched by the vicissitudes of time and social prejudices. His sole negative trait of excessive naivety may be traced to the demands of his profession that prevent him from exploring and rejoicing in the strength of his own personality. His is the role of spectator, not a participant in life. Magda's greatness lies in her power to struggle on, growing in stature, learning from every failure and from every sin; Heffterdingk, however, has withdrawn his spirit from all emotional turbulence, choosing peace and moderation in all things. In essence, he belongs to the category of mildly liberal priests that are in the majority in Sudermann's works. His role in *Heimat* is thus to represent the fulcrum between two extremes of social maladjustment with the promise of eventual harmonious compromise.

Es War (1894)

One of Sudermann's most striking pastor figures is that of Pastor Brenckenberg in his early novel *Es War*. His role as a churchman in an age reverberant with social and spiritual conflict is essential to this work. He is a massive Teuton, feared by all, and his looks are calculated to reinforce the impression of immense strength and crude fleshly appetites:

> Er war ein Mann zu Ende der Fünfzig, hochgewachsen, mit massigem Schulterbau, rotem Specknacken und einem wohlgepflegten Bäuchlein. Das spärliche, stark gefettete Haupthaar trug er glatt, in der Mitte gescheitelt und hinter die Ohren zurückgekämmt, so dass es in zerfaserten Christuslocken das rote, feiste Gesicht umrahmte, das trotz seiner hängenden Backen und der vollen, feuchten, in der Mitte tiefgekerbten Feinschmeckerlippen stark und kräftig dreinschaute und ganz dazu angetan schien, eine gewisse Ehrfurcht einzuflössen.[14]

Every feature, from the paunch to the full, wet lips, creates an impression of a character as coarse as it is powerful. This is no ascetic dedicated to penance and self-discipline; Brenckenberg thoroughly enjoys life and all its pleasures of the flesh, such as good food and drink. He can easily drink any man in the area under the table (with the exception of his own son). Perhaps for these reasons, Francis Coram Oakes describes Brenckenberg as "nothing more than a sot."[17] However, Brenckenberg's entire personality radiates an unmistakable peasant strength that is firmly rooted in primeval Teutonic traditions of faith and obedience. The religion he represents, like that of Luther, rejects the intellect as too easily leading the human race astray, preferring the secure fortress of faith in a deity as terrible as it is majestic. His carousing, his temper and his obvious faults do not conceal the fact that Brenckenberg personifies the power implicit in the old Protestant traditions which are still unchanged in the rural areas that Sudermann depicts.

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[14] Hermann Sudermann, *Es War*, p. 111.

This striking combination of spiritual strength and physical crudity appears even in Brenckenberg's youth when he "als verbummelter Kandidat die Gegend unsicher machte" (111). His lack of ascetic self-restraint proves to be deceptive; hired to teach the increasingly unmanageable Leo, the young wastrel turns out to be not only a ruthless disciplinarian but also an understanding companion for his adolescent charge. At the same time, Leo's father, himself a dissipated bon-vivant, finds in the young priest a greed for pleasure to match his own:

> Doch hatte sich der sichere Blick des alten Lebemannes auch diesmal nicht getäuscht. Der neue Hauslehrer führte ein eisernes Regiment und wurde daneben als derber Spassmacher und unverwüstlicher Saufkumpan unschätzbar und unentbehrlich. (111)

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[17] Francis Coram Oakes, "Autobiographical Elements in Hermann Sudermann's Novels", p. 79.

The character that Sudermann portrays here is part of the German soil and the German spiritual heritage, a figure that is unthinkable in any other context. Where his religion is concerned, Brenckenberg personifies the original Protestant tradition in its unbending morality and its subjugation of the individual to the will of God. His iron rule over his flock (reinforced where he perceives it necessary by his fist) has little to do with the spreading of Christian love and charity. To him the peasants are people of distinctly inferior social and intellectual levels, who must be strictly guided in the paths of righteousness and guarded from all the temptations of evil. His duty, as he sees it, is to keep their souls safe, and to this end, no means are too harsh.

Purity and sin are not theoretical theological terms to Brenckenberg; for him, sin belongs to life and is part of the human spirit. To sin is inevitable and even necessary if an individual is to mature into wisdom. To live and to be human means a never-ending struggle with sin. The crucial point for this pastor is thus not the sin itself, but the act of honest repentance that must follow it through which the sinner acquires fresh knowledge of himself and his potential for good or evil. Thus while Leo in his Junker arrogance rejects repentance in favour of reparation, Brenckenberg insists upon sincere penance for Leo's crime. This moral conflict is the basis of the novel, with Leo trapped between his pride and what he refers to as his "verdammtes protestantisches Gewissen" (303).

Pastor Brenckenberg sees himself as a sinner who must sin, being human, and who must also repent. Thus he whole-heartedly accepts his own weaknesses and just as whole-heartedly and sincerely repents of them:

> Dafür lag er auch am nächsten Sonntag vor versammelter Gemeinde auf den Knien und schrie tränenüberströmt und mit gerungenen Händen zu Gott um Vergebung für seine und seiner Brüder Sünden empor. (112)

Morality in Brenckenberg's view is only acquired through personal struggle, defeat and honest repentance. Sin and virtue are intended to co-exist in the world, with each individual allotted a certain freedom beyond which he may not stray:

> Aber damit die Sünde wirklich ihr Gutes habe gleichwie die Tugend - und damit der Sünder wie der Gerechte sich unter die gleichen Gesetze beuge, hat *Er* die Heilsordnung aufgerichtet ... Danach ist jedem Menschen sein bestimmtes Mass von Sünden zugeteilt; das darf er nicht überschreiten, sonst fällt der ganze Bau auseinander ... (291)

Leo, through his affair with Felicitas, the subsequent duel with her husband and his lie to Ulrich, has clearly overstepped the mark. In the sermon intended to prod Leo's conscience, the pastor characteristically combines threats of hell-fire with a fervent appeal for divine forgiveness based on Leo's fundamental good nature. Even Junker arrogance must give way before this obviously genuine emotion:

> Betroffen sah Leo vor sich nieder ... Der da oben - halb war er Prophet und halb Hanswurst - aber Recht hatte er. - Zum Himmel stank die Tat, das vermochte kein Leichtsinn wegzuleugnen. (125)

If one considers the character of Pastor Brenckenberg in the social framework of his time, it is clear that he watches over his flock without permitting any modern or liberal thoughts to take root. Liberalism has no place in his views on religious or secular matters. Modern ideas of social equality or emancipation are either attacked or simply ignored as irrelevant. Indeed, Brenckenberg discusses the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah during his sermons with specific reference to Berlin and the Social Democrats. He addresses peasants as "Er" and accepts without question the values of his aristocratic patrons. His function is not to preach for change, but rather to work for the preservation of the existing social order as willed by God. The extent of his obedience to aristocratic codes of behaviour is revealed in his appeal to Leo to fight a duel with his son, a duel that would restore Kurt Brenckenberg's honour while almost certainly costing him his life.

The Wengern district in which Pastor Brenckenberg rules thus builds a tiny oasis of arch-conservatism, where isolated from the stresses, political and social, of urban life, he adopts methods only possible in rural areas where customs are not easily altered. For Richter, this conservatism implies criticism on the part of the author directed against the excessive authority of such village priests:

> Bei einem Vergleich der fiktiven Pastoren bei Fontane, Raabe und Sudermann, werden die Gegensätze deutlich. Fontanes und Raabes Dorfpfarrer erfüllen die hohen menschlichen Anforderungen, die man an

> Seelsorger stellt. Sie erscheinen als Vorbilder. Sudermann hingegen verweist auf das unpastorale und heuchlerische Verhalten dieser Gesellschaftsschicht. Er schildert den Pfarrer zum Teil als Despoten und Gewaltmenschen, der durch Strafandrohung und Gewaltanwendung seine naiven Dörfler völlig beherrscht.[18]

This analysis, while fitting the character of Götz, cannot be applied to Brenckenberg, whose undeniable faults only serve to emphasize his simple humanity, and whose authoritarian behaviour (as the author makes clear) meets with the perfect understanding of his rural flock. It is this lack of sophistication and rough common-sense that permit him to blend as a personality into his surroundings without the slightest difficulty. His peasant crudity leads Jürgensen to dismiss him as "eigentlich nicht viel mehr als ein Clown, der einen Talar trägt,"[19] but most of Brenckenberg's effectiveness in his parish, however, stems from his understanding and complete adaptation to rural attitudes. His iron rule over his flock is difficult to conceive of except in a peaceful backwater where pastor and Junker between them are solely responsible for the spiritual and material welfare of the peasants.

Brenckenberg's rejection of modern liberalism by no means indicates a limited intellect; he chooses to accept the social order as it stands and to work within its limits. Like the other pastors in Sudermann's works, he has the role of preservation, not change. He accepts without demur a social structure that places the aristocrat squarely above all other classes, and within these limits he accomplishes more than the city churchmen, who must reach a more sophisticated audience.

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[18] Gunter Walter Richter, "Die Gesellschaftskritik im Prosawerk Hermann Sudermanns", p. 168.

[19] Hans Jürgensen, *Henrik Ibsens Einfluss auf Hermann Sudermann*, p. 77.

Sudermann portrays Brenckenberg not merely as a ranting rural bigot; he shows in counterpoint the softer side of his character, thus rounding him off into a positive and engaging personality. His swift rescue of a pregnant girl, his understanding of Johanna's tragic loneliness, the ill-concealed pride in his son, all are character traits that negate the popular critical view of Brenckenberg as a clownish, dissipated and unimportant figure in this novel. The combination of coarse appetites and good humour, of compassion and ferocious faith make him a representative of a medieval tradition of priesthood, in which the pastor wields almost supreme authority among his peasants.

In Brenckenberg, we see a churchman totally integrated with his religion, his community, and the ancient customs of his homeland. It is clear from the start that men like him represent a type that is dying out in a society that is convulsing under the impact of industrialization, advancing technology and aggressive new ideals. Brenckenberg may flourish in the countryside, but on his rare trips to Berlin, he sees the first signs of change in a Church that has had to liberalize its position in order to adapt to the times. These urbane churchmen quote literature from the pulpit; Brenckenberg hurls threats of fire and brimstone.

These priests adopt an oleaginous tone of love and charity; Brenckenberg on the other hand is more likely to seize an erring sheep by the throat. These pastors eschew all vulgar emotion; Brenckenberg enters the pulpit with the full intention of spurring his audience to a frenzy of religious ecstasy. To urban worshippers, such methods seem not only excessive but outdated:

> Wenn sich von Zeit zu Zeit ein moderner Hauptstädter, der sich in seinen Kirchen von liberal angehauchten Predigern mit Literatur aus Goethe und Lessing unterhalten liess, in die Wengernsche Kirche verirrte, so nannte er dies Treiben pfäffisches Komödiantentum und fühlte sich dadurch an Abraham a Santa Clara erinnert, aber so gebildet war unter den Eingeborenen niemand. (112)

Significantly, even Brenckenberg's own diocese finds him an acute embarrassment; the attempts to relieve him of his post are symptomatic of the changing times and of new trends within the Church. His success as a pastor is depicted as clearly short-lived; it is types like the Superintendant Fürbringer, representing a more dignified and intellectualized faith, who will survive. While they appeal to the intellect of their parishioners through charitable activities and discussions, Brenckenberg rejects the sterile disciplines of the mind and emphasizes absolute faith.

In *Es War*, Sudermann appears to contrast two traditions of Christian worship as personified in the characters of Pastor Brenckenberg and Superintendent Fürbringer. There are no hard and fast conclusions arrived at in this contrast, but it is clear that Brenckenberg, while lacking the dignity one normally associates with his office, nevertheless reveals an effective knowledge of human nature, whereas Fürbringer, though a civilized and compassionate man, is ignorant of such matters except upon a superficial level.

Sudermann even carries the contrast over into the family lives of these two churchmen. When Leo, seeking spiritual solace, visits the Superintendant, his first impression of the Fürbringer household is one of a sparkling cleanliness and silence that is divorced from the only too depressing reality of life:

> Die Dielen des Hausflurs, den er betrat, leuchteten ihm mit gedämpftem Silberglanze so nagelneu entgegen, als wären sie soeben vom Tischler gekommen. Denselben Glanz strömten die Stufen der Holztreppe aus, die zum oberen Stockwerk führte. Jede Rippe, jede Wolke des Gemasers war in den Brettern zu erkennen, wiewohl sie schon seit manchem Jahr an dieser Stelle liegen mochten. (378)

This orderliness extends even to the Fürbringer children. The little girl who welcomes Leo has nothing in common with the boisterous Brenckenberg brood. Her clothes are immaculate, her movements soundless and her manners reflect the most painstaking training in decorum on the part of her parents. The overall impression one receives of the Fürbringer girl is that of a child without natural instincts of noise and laughter, rendered old before her time by loving but excessive discipline:

> Ein zwölfjähriges Mädchen mit einer steifgefälteten weissen Latzenschürze, die wie der Kragen eines Mandarinen über die Achseln hinausragte, erschien auf der Schwelle einer geräuschlos geöffneten Tür, knickste artig und erwartete dann stumm, was er ihr sagen würde. (378)

It is an interesting point that this child is rendered almost sexless by the overscrupulous sterility of her hairstyle, in sharp contrast to the peacock instincts of Kurt Brenckenberg, whose clothes are a vivid signal of the aggressive sexuality of young manhood:

> Ihr hellblondes Haar unterschied sich so wenig von der Farbe ihrer Haut und war so glatt über den Kopf zurückgestrichen, dass es des Zöpfchens bedurfte, das im Nacken ein Nest bildete, um zu erkennen, dass sie nicht kahlköpfig war. (378)

The contrast also extends to the wives of these two churchmen. Frau Brenckenberg is described as "eine gute, heftige und mässig gebildete Frau" (106) who lacks control over her quarrelsome, ill-disciplined family. Her relationship with Brenckenberg is not one of mutual respect; her husband treats her as he would one of the children. She is not a life partner in the strict sense of the term but rather a housewife of limited intelligence and breeding, only one step above the position of a menial. No mention is made of any independent activities on her part.

Frau Fürbringer, on the other hand, is depicted as a silent, dignified woman who is renowned for her charitable work in the parish:

> Hager und dennoch würdevoll, ernst und dennoch freundlich, streng und dennoch gutherzig, schien sie recht eigentlich dazu angetan, Frauenvereinen ohne Geziere zu präsidieren und den Ehrenplatz neben der Frau Landrätin mit ruhigem Selbstbewusstsein einzunehmen. (383)

The contrast between the two women, the one refined and disciplined, the other coarse but good-natured, reflects to a great extent the differing religious and secular attitudes of their husbands. Pastor Brenckenberg is a preacher who enforces his authority without compunction. His emphasis upon the need for absolute and unquestioning faith and his rejection of liberal trends categorize him as one of the old guard. He cherishes no illusions about the weaknesses of the human race and its infinite capacity for evil. Fürbringer, however, maintains a gentle Christian optimism that has little to do with the harsh realities of life. His attitude reflects the shifting of the Church away from extreme conservatism to a slightly more liberal standpoint, in order not to alienate an increasingly well-educated audience.

Described here is an accompanying loss of enriching emotional experience without which a Church that depends upon engaging the hearts and minds of its followers (as Brenckenberg does) is rendered sterile and devoid of authority. The mildness of Fürbringer's message on divine love is thus far less effective than his colleague's bellicose rhetoric. It is significant that Leo receives no comfort from Fürbringer, not because his advice is inappropriate, but because the tranquillity of the Superintendant's spirit makes him impervious to psychological torment. His mind, like his household, is spotless, and thus incapable of truly fathoming guilt in all but its most basic manifestations. Fürbringer is motivated solely by what Sudermann describes ironically as the "Harmonie seiner Weltanschauung" (385). It is this harmony, this sure recognition of his own moral perfection, that leads to a trace of happy complacency, an impression reinforced by little habits, such as smacking his lips.

Brenckenberg, on the other hand, may be coarse, dissipated or comic, but the knowledge of his faults never permits him to become complacent. Fürbringer's purity is genuine but sterile; but Brenckenberg is a sinner, who, by virtue of his own guilt, can recognize and correct it in others. For this reason, he is beloved by his peasant flock, who see in him not a plaster saint, but a man like other men, subject to the same temptations and willing to repent. Unlike Brenckenberg, the Superintendent experiences no soul-searching; in his calm certainty of spiritual perfection, there is no room for any inner conflict.

Leo must leave the Fürbringer household still trapped in the choking atmosphere of his guilt; the Superintendent, not able to understand his pain, cannot give him anything but kindly platitudes:

> Leo erhob sich, Abschied zu nehmen. Dieser Mann - man musste ihn gernhaben - aber der Priester, den er brauchte, war er nicht. Und er eilte davon - ohne Trost, wie er gekommen. Ihm war, als müsse er den Staub jener Friedensstätte von seinen Füssen schütteln, aber Staub gab es dort nicht. (385)

Thus we see that it is Brenckenberg whom Sudermann portrays as a more vital, positive figure than Fürbringer. In spite of all the latter's obvious virtues, he appears as a colourless personality, incapable of passionate faith. By intellectualizing and liberalizing his religion, he has sacrificed that flame of fanaticism that drives Brenckenberg to such ecstasies in his pulpit. It is possible that Fürbringer's differing approach to worship reflects the development of an originally inflexible faith into more tolerant attitudes. This description reflects perhaps the very real trend on the part of the Evangelical Church towards rationalism and away from dogma.[20] In *Es War*, true faith is associated with absolute belief; where the Church turns away from the heart to address itself to the mind, we see a loss of effectiveness in that probabilities and conflicts have been introduced into a sphere where absolutes must prevail in order to be meaningful to a lesser-educated populace.

The relationship between Churchmen and society in this early work is more subtly developed than in later novels and plays. The emphasis in this category is laid yet again on the problematic position of a churchman in a changing world. In Brenckenberg's refusal to entertain changes in the social or religious sphere and Fürbringer's acceptance of the new times we see this difficulty of a traditional Church personified.

Johannisfeuer (1900)

The preacher Haffke in Sudermann's play *Johannisfeuer* is yet another character on the liberal lines of Heffterdingk and Fürbringer, gentle, honest and with a touch of natural poetry in his spirit. In some character traits, Haffke is closer to Brenckenberg, e.g. in his unembarrassed use of broad dialect, his sly peasant sense of humour, and the simplicity of his faith. Like Brenckenberg too, he blends perfectly into his rural parish, but would appear quite out of place in a larger urban centre. He possesses the rare quality of joy untroubled, of taking pleasure in his life and work. His piety is as natural to him as bread; it needs no discussion and no soul-searching. He does not see himself as an avenging angel, nor does he approach his work in a grave or complacent manner. Humour and a gentle, self-deprecating irony set Haffke slightly apart from the group of more liberal priests.

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[20] S. Baring-Gould, *The Church in Germany* (London: Wells Gardner, Darton & Co., 1891), pp. 390-91.

In *Johannisfeuer*, the theme is again that of individual desires conflicting with the traditional order of the community and the family. The title stands for the ancient pagan festival that takes place once a year, when the peasants celebrate the rituals of a faith far older and harsher than Christianity. In Rudolph Lothar's words:

> Die Achse des Dramas aber ist der schöne, dichterische Gedanke, dass in uns allen ein Stück Heidentum wurzelt, trotz aller moralischer und religiöser Konventionen, trotz aller Kulturtünche. So ist ja auch das Johannisfeuer in der Johannisnacht solch ein heidnisch in unsere Zeit hereinlodernder Brand.[21]

Haffke, like Heffterdingk, is brought face to face with this pagan spirit as represented by Georg and Marikke, who seize their happiness while they can, before they must submit to the laws of duty and responsibility. Like Heffterdingk too, Haffke's resistance to the inherent egoism of this attitude is gentle but inexorable. Faced with Georg's praise of pagan freedom as symbolized by the wild celebrations of this night, he is, as we see, temporarily at a loss. The essence of Christianity to him is love; the ruthless egocentricity advocated by people like Georg has nothing to do with maturity or self-sacrifice or simple human responsibility.

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[21] Rudolph Lothar, *Das deutsche Drama der Gegenwart* (München & Leipzig: Georg Müller, 1905), p. 269.

Criticism of the character of Haffke tends to concentrate upon his "drollig ungelenke"[22] behaviour and to ignore his function in the play both as the theological and ethical counterweight to Marikke and Georg. Many critics like Bulthaupt dismiss his character as an unimportant clown because of his wry peasant humour and heavy accent:

> Das schlichte einfache Herz soll er sein, das auch über seine pastorale Würde scherzen darf - aber wir glauben ihm doch den Knobelbecher leichter als den Kelch der Eucharistie und möchten ihm raten, den Talar je eher je lieber auszuziehen, um ein ganz ehrlicher Mensch zu werden, da er mit *seinen* Gesinnungen in seinem Amt doch nicht sein oder bleiben kann. Und wenn er unter allen Sudermannschen Geistlichen der liebenswürdigste ist, so ist er darum als Theologe auch der unglaubwürdigste. Solche Menschen wie er predigen nicht.[23]

Haffke, though wealthy, is of peasant stock and makes no pretence to be otherwise:

> Von meinem Vater hab' ich auch die jemeine Aussprache her. Zum Hofpred'jer würd' ich mich auch wohl weniger eijnen, aber fir meine Bauern bin ich chut jenug.[24]

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[22] Theodor Kappstein, *Sudermann und seine besten 17 Bühnenwerke*, p. 75.
[23] Heinrich Bulthaupt, *Dramaturgie des Schauspiels* (Oldenburg & Leipzig: Schulzesche Hof-Buchhandlung, 1909), p. 470.
[24] Hermann Sudermann, *Johannisfeuer*, in *Dramatische Werke*, II (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1923), 22.

His lack of snobbery and his simplicity emphasize the positive side of the philosophy that Marikke opposes. On the other hand, Frank Chandler's description of Haffke as a "rough and unspiritual pastor who has secured his position through currying favor with fellow students",[25] given the text, is so inaccurate as to be bewildering. The behaviour he refers to is actually the basic note of practical, self-effacing Christianity that Haffke represents when he shares his formal robe with his friends without complaint.

In conclusion, we see that Haffke, like the other pastors in Sudermann's works, confronts a trend that he, as a man of the Church, cannot accept. Like Heffterdingk, he adopts a moderate position in this conflict, neither condemning the adherents of this new Weltanschauung nor joining them in their ruthless pursuit of personal fulfilment at the cost of the family and the community. His brand of faith, again like Heffterdingk's, has liberal overtones without ever becoming radical. Service, not bigotry, is his motto, and this places him among the ranks of the liberal second group of pastors who manage to move with the changing times.

Die Freundin (1915)

In the first play of the trilogy titled *Die entgötterte Welt*, Sudermann discusses in detail the role of churchmen and the Church in a society where Nietzschean ideas glorifying the individual in his battle against society have borne fruit. Written in 1915, the trilogy reveals its basic theme in its title: the effect exercised upon a traditional society that lives by Christian morality by those disciples of the new teachings that reject not only Christian dogma but also those precepts of Darwinian theory that proclaim the control of Nature over the individual. The play is constructed around the triangle of traditional faith, agnostic humanism and the doctrine that advocates the release of the Dionysian in word and deed.

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[25] Frank W. Chandler, *Aspects of Modern Drama* (Michigan: The Macmillan Company, 1939), p. 147.

The friend referred to in this play is Juliane Rother, who, on a visit to the home of a widowed aristocrat, wreaks havoc by putting these theories into practice. She represents the spirit of the new age in all its anarchical neuroticism. Her opponent is Dr. Götz, who stands for the principle of rational humanism. The third point of this triangle is held by Pastor Schilling, whose character reflects the problems of preserving traditional religious belief in an increasingly troubled society.

On the one hand, the weakness of Schilling's ethical and moral position is revealed in his relationship with the widowed Alice von Hilgenfeld. He acts as her guide, who unobtrusively protects his obedient charge from any shadow of scandal. His sole desire is to preserve Alice's child-like state of innocence. The conventionality of his faith does not encourage him to attempt changing her into a mature, self-reliant woman. Although Schilling recognizes only too well that her state of innocence has never really been tested and is precarious in the extreme, his only concern is to shelter her, not to lead her to intellectual and emotional independence.

Thus we see that traditional concepts of morality mislead conventional churchmen like Schilling into mistaking inexperience for purity and immaturity for goodwill. His relative passivity is symptomatic of a Church that has not yet adjusted to a different age and differing philosophies. His is a defensive, not an active or aggressive attitude to society. To Schilling, Juliane may be one of the people from the outside world who may injure Alice; however, we see that the thought of leading Alice to self-reliance does not occur to him. For him, the world is divided into his flock and the society out there; it is a world he does not understand and does not wish to understand. Snug in his cocoon of familiar faces and peaceful routines of worship, he fails in his duty to learn how to deal with this world himself or to teach his parishioners how to do so. His instinctive reaction is rejection and retreat, not intellectual curiosity.

It is no coincidence that Pastor Schilling is largely responsible for the disaster that overtakes the Hilgenfeld household. Adolf Zucker's description of the Ibsenian villain is perhaps better suited to Pastor Schilling's folly. By his well-meant interference, he introduces Juliane into Alice's life; by his naive trust in humanity he betrays a sacred trust to Juliane which leads eventually to the end of Alice's happiness. His innocence leaves him vulnerable in a new society that has lost all respect for traditional values.

The value of unselfish service to the family and the community is repeated in this play with greater emphasis. That Juliane represents a dangerous social trend which is far removed from the common aims of Götz, Schilling and Kray is made clear in their debate in Act II, Scene i. These three men each personify a different philosophy, but compared to the demonic egoism of Juliane, they all strive towards the same goal, i.e. their responsibility as human beings to aid the human race. Juliane feels no commitment to humanity. To her, it is a mass of largely inferior beings with whom she has nothing in common. Kray, the atheist, sees a certain divinity in the harmony of his own soul; Götz, the rationalist, considers God only another name for Nature, the power that directs one's every action; Schilling, the traditionalist, is content and secure in the teachings of his faith. But for Juliane, the entire discussion on God and the soul is not only unimportant but outdated. The Dionysian principle rules; those who cannot adapt to the demands of their own personality must be abandoned to a life of banality. In her icy narcissism, she rejects not only God, but also the common philosophical substitutes such as Nature, humanism, science, etc. Her individuality is her sole deity, the only object that means anything to her, and there is no weapon she will not use and no person she will not manipulate to feed her ego. The need for a common defense against such anarchy is symbolized in Schilling's tolerance of the atheism of Götz. As he says to Juliane:

> Ich habe unseren Doktor hier stets für meinen geistigen Antipoden gehalten, aber ich sehe, wir, er und ich, stehen beinahe Schulter an Schulter der Weltanschauung gegenüber, die sich mir durch Sie zum ersten Male - ich muss sagen - in erschreckender Weise offenbart.[24]

Schilling's reasons for this tolerance are again significant; he points out that both Götz and Kray are well-known for their compassionate service to the community (the atheist Kray has even built a church for his peasants). His relationship with these two men is a civilized one, based upon mutual respect between individuals of unimpeachable integrity, whatever their differing philosophies. In this context, Schilling clearly belongs to the more liberal type of pastor in Sudermann's works. In an age where traditional dogma suffers rejection, churchmen like him must adapt to survive. Schilling has already taken the first step towards this adjustment by demonstrating tolerance. However, his circumscribed outlook on life is sharply revealed in his inability to understand Juliane or even hold his own in intellectual debate. The sociopath is still beyond his ken.

The play ends upon a note of muted optimism. Juliane and Alice leave together, plainly destined for a life of degradation. The child Alfred, who has always fiercely and instinctively rejected Juliane, remains under the care of Götz and Schilling, who will prepare him for life. Thus these two opposing philosophies unite at the end in a symbiotic relationship to form a common defense against the social malady that Juliane represents. They stand for the fundamental integrity of the human spirit which will overcome empty nihilism.

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[24] Hermann Sudermann, *Die Freundin*, in *Dramatische Werke*, V (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1923), 262.

Die Freundin is one of Sudermann's weakest efforts, its content rendered tedious by the overly moralistic tone. Its importance, however, lies in the position that Sudermann takes in the age-old clash between the individual and the dictates of society. The creator of supreme individualists like Magda and Beate also saw the pitfalls of unbridled egoism. In this play we are placed before the thesis that a combination of morality and rational humanism are essential for the functioning of civilized society. Enjoined upon the individual is not narcissistic parasitism on society, but the recognition of a personal duty to serve one's fellow human beings.

SUMMARY

Several common factors are immediately apparent in this category. Sudermann's six main pastor characters are portrayed as active, influential churchmen in rural communities or small provincial towns, where the discipline of traditional worship is still maintained and the role of the pastor still an important one. In this group, the author concentrates primarily on the basic conflict between the pastor and the demands of a changing society. In other words, how do these representatives of a church distinguished by its duty to preserve essential beliefs adapt to different trends in the society they must serve? Do they resist the changes of time, or adopt a different philosophy, or even over-compensate for such influences around them? This problematic position of pastors is a minor theme in Sudermann's early creative period, but becomes more pronounced in his later works.

None of these men are depicted as intellectual or radical. Haffke (*Johannisfeuer*) is of peasant stock; the others are middle-class. None of them have any difficulty adjusting to their parish work; in fact they blend perfectly into these rural backwaters. They are not ascetics; half are married, while bachelors like Heffterdingk (*Heimat*) and Haffke (*Johannisfeuer*) are shown as capable of deep and abiding affection.

All these figures are described as extremely influential among their flock. Götz (*Der Katzensteg*) and Brenckenberg (*Es War*) actually enforce their will with violence if necessary; to them their peasants are ill-advised and inferior beings who must be strictly controlled and saved from temptation. More often, however, the pastor's influence is gentle and beneficial, based upon the respect of the people for his integrity. In the case of Götz and Brenckenberg, their faith and their nature is militant, rejecting any liberalism in the religious or secular sphere. The other four create the impression of a tranquil piety and trusting innocence, untroubled by any doubts about the existence of God or their purpose in life. Only Heffterdingk (*Heimat*) voices a certain regret about the limitations imposed on him by his vocation, but it is clearly a loss that he has long since accepted with grace.

While these pastors are generally portrayed as sympathetic and tolerant, they are far from being revolutionaries committed to altering Church policy. Their moderation is passive, not active; they are not inimical to differing view-points, but neither are they prepared to change. They do not appear in Sudermann's works as social activists. Though influential, they work without exception for the preservation and the stability of the family and the community, and as such, they accept the social structure as it stands, without questioning its morality or its justice. And while they are not depicted as servile towards the aristocratic strata, they render unto Caesar without hesitation what is his due. The pastor in one of Sudermann's earliest works, *Frau Sorge*, lectures a class of village children preparing for their confirmation upon the equality of all human beings before God and the need for humility; at the same time, however, he ensures that the wealthier pupils receive the best seats in the church. Incidents like this cause Jürgensen to feel that Sudermann's attitude to his pastor figures is generally negative:

> Sudermann ist sonst dem offiziellen Christentum nicht sehr geneigt. Seine Art, wie er die Vertreter desselben, die Geistlichen, behandelt, zeigt dies genügsam.[27]

These six main characters reflect to a certain extent the conflicts within the Church itself. Pastors like Brenckenberg (*Es War*) remain obdurately traditional, rejecting city preachers who convert their sermons into dreary literary seminars from the pulpit. On the other hand, churchmen like Fürbringer (*Es War*) represent the more modern trend within the faith; their emphasis is on a rational, practical Christianity and on divine love rather than on divine retribution. They represent a turning away from rigid orthodoxy towards greater sophistication and flexibility. Fürbringer feels, for example, that different ideas are no threat and indeed provide fresh energy for the Church. Significantly, he also points out that times are changing and that men like Brenckenberg would now find it impossible to acquire positions with their behaviour.

From *Heimat* onwards, Sudermann's portrayal of pastors tends to be positive and sympathetic, if also making them rather passive. Fitzell actually feels that his portrayal is "aüsserst sympathisch."[28] When brought into conflict with their times and their society, they appear to lack in initiative what they possess in piety. Perhaps this explains Bulthaupt's analysis of Sudermann's pastors:

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[27] Hans Jürgensen, *Henrik Ibsens Einfluss auf Hermann Sudermann*, p. 76.

[28] John Fitzell, "Hermann Sudermann: Feuer- und Wassermotivik im dramatischen Werk," in *Hermann Sudermann. Werk und Wirkung*, p. 164.

> Seltsam! Was Sudermann nur an den Geistlichen findet,um sie - nicht zu parodieren, denn nichts liegt ihm ferner als das - sondern in Situationen zu bringen, in denen sie erhaben wirken sollten und doch nur eine halb oder ganz komische Rolle zu spielen gezwungen werden.[29]

Other critics like Hubert Walter have concentrated upon only one aspect of the type, e.g. the character trait of simplicity:

> Nur bei Rampenlicht erwachen Sudermanns Pastoren zu einem künstlichen Leben. Es ist nicht allein ihre Amtstracht, die sie einander gleichmacht, sie sind vom Dichter samt und sonders ein wenig als Karikaturen gesehen [...] ihre Aktionen scheitern jedesmal kläglich. Sie verstehen die Menschen nicht und reden an ihnen vorbei. Sie sind schlichte, gerade Naturen, die keine Ahnung haben von den seelischen Schwierigkeiten ihrer Mitmenschen.[30]

Sudermann's pastors represent a midway stage between the old school of Protestantism and the new; too conventional to break away from the comforting shelter of dogma, they nevertheless demonstrate a striking degree of tolerance for radically different social trends, such as materialism and Nietzschean egocentricity. The author's portrayal of this particular type stresses yet again the need to reject rigid convention that would rob the individual of his precious freedom, but at the same time he postulates the need for an ethical basis for even the most individualistic person. Without this basis, such individualism is portrayed as soon degenerating into futile narcissism. The Church, and thus these churchmen, must learn to adjust to a society that is struggling to break free of a conservatism that is often identified with the moral and ethical codes held for centuries by the Church. In this conflict, we see that those who can live and act with moderation will survive; those who refuse to compromise will see their influence gradually die away. Thus Sudermann's pastors stand at the crossroads of Church history, on the threshold of the modern age. Some, like Heffterdingk (*Heimat*) and Haffke (*Johannisfeuer*), will adapt to these times by virtue of their insistence on Christian charity; others, like Brenckenberg (*Es War*), are effective only in their specific social and historical context. Their ideas and methods, however worthy, will soon be ignored by a more irreverent and cynical generation.

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[29] Heinrich Bulthaupt, *Dramaturgie des Schauspiels*, p. 470.
[30] Hubert Walter, *Sudermann und die Franzosen*, p. 130.

IV. THE PEASANTS

The peasant type in Sudermann's earlier works appears only in minor roles, e.g. the brutal mob in the *Der Katzensteg* or the distant group of joyful workers celebrating the wild festivities of *Johannisfeuer*. Only the *Litauischen Geschichten* focus all attention upon the peasants of Sudermann's Eastern Prussian homeland. Written in 1917, the stylized and timeless realm of these four tales provides the spiritual counterpoint to a country already torn by internal strife and ravaged by war. From the *Litauischen Geschichten*, we receive the chief stock of peasant characters in Sudermann's works.

As the title suggests, the peasants portrayed are almost exclusively of pure Lithuanian extraction, even though their overlords and the ruling bureaucracy are nearly always German. Any mixing of the two races is rare (except for service in the army and as part of the labour force), and the cultures remain separate. As we shall see, however, the peasant types which appear are similar for German and Lithuanian alike. Each of these four stories represents a perfect whole and the author frequently intervenes with remarks which heighten the identification of reader with protagonist. Describing the role of the narrator in *Die Reise nach Tilsit*, Werner Zimmermann says:

> Er spricht dabei eine Sprache, die sich im Augenblick der Wahrnehmung selbst schon zu bilden

> scheint. Erst in den letzten beiden Sätzen gewinnt er Abstand vom Erzählten. Je und je unterbricht er seinen Redestrom durch Fragen, die die Anteilnahme der unmittelbar gegenwärtig gedachten Zuhörer immer wieder aufs neue erheischen, die aber auch gleichsam seiner eigenen Orientierung während des Erzählens dienen.[1]

The stories do not concentrate upon one theme, but embrace the totality of peasant life, revealing the endless cycle of birth, toil, death, and, above all, the grinding, unceasing battle of the peasant for survival, where individual existence is pared down to the bare, primeval essentials of seeking shelter, acquiring food, defending one's territory, and raising the young to survive on their own. Motekat emphasizes this aspect of gritty realism when he describes these tales as:

> ... lebens- und wirklichkeitsnahe Erzählungen von dem ebenso einfachen wie zutiefst problematischen Leben der preussisch-litauischen Bewohner des Memelgebiets, der Haffdörfer und der kurischen Nehrung.[2]

Upon considering the peasant figures in the *Litauischen Geschichten* and elsewhere, we may distinguish two main types with only minor variations. The first type is almost wholly positive for men and women. This is the hard-working, shy but amiable personality, ill-at-ease in unfamiliar situations and with unfamiliar people, but endowed with an untroubled harmony of spirit. These people are diligent workers, and though they are not portrayed as bright, they possess an undeniable shrewdness and business acumen. Their natural resilience is combined with a basic fatalism, both derived from their constant struggle to eke out a living from an environment as hostile as it is beautiful. The peasants in *Jons und Erdme* continue to build their homes upon the unstable moorland, knowing full well that a flood could destroy all their work in minutes; when disaster strikes, however, they return to the scene of devastation and begin the task of reconstruction with dour determination. Such fatalistic acceptance of labour, success, sorrow and catastrophe is counterbalanced by emotions which are natural and untainted by artifice.

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[1] Werner Zimmermann, *Deutsche Prosadichtungen der Gegenwart*, I (Düsseldorf: Pädagogischer Verlag Schwann, 1958), 26.
[2] Helmut Motekat, *Ostpreussische Literaturgeschichte mit Danzig und Westpreussen* (München: Schild-Verlag, 1977) p. 337.

Sudermann's peasants are children of Nature, who are rarely capable of introspection and who react directly and without reflection to any stimuli. In their uncomplicated relationship to their environment lies a perspective of this class that is unchanged in Sudermann's works as far back as his collection of short stories written in 1887, titled *Im Zwielicht*. These figures appear as naive, hard-working and quite unconcerned about upper-class notions of justice and honour. Slow-moving but determined in matters of love, hate and greed, they embody the principle of self-sufficiency. Though the acquisition of property is a matter of extreme importance, it is not necessarily regarded as a stepping-stone to elevation into the bourgeoisie. Their industry signifies rather the need not only for self-respect but also for independence, e.g. the secret dream of Erdme and her husband (*Jons und Erdme*) of one day owning their land. They are content with their social position; they strive for betterment within the class and not to escape it. Social advancement is usually only desired for the children, such as Indre's hope that her son will become a pastor (*Die Reise nach Tilsit*).

Sudermann's peasants do not rebel against their lot in life. This does not mean, however, that they appear as bovine, mindless creatures. While they accept much of their hardships without complaint, they also adapt with cunning and resourcefulness to any crisis that crops up. This cunning, perverted into cruelty, is the chief characteristic of the second peasant type, one that appears less frequently but is equally powerful. Such peasants are calculating, even murderous in their determination. Oddly enough, they are portrayed as just as industrious as the first type and as successful, but their efficiency is masked by their uninhibited brutality, e.g. Alute (*Miks Bumbullis*), who poisons her foster-child, Busze (*Die Reise nach Tilsit*), who spurs her lover on to murder his wife, or the sinister mother and son of the Wolfsnest farm (*Die Magd*). Their crimes are usually motivated by jealousy, but this is only one facet of a type that is wholly evil.

A. THE MAJOR CHARACTERS

1. Paul Meyhöfer (*Frau Sorge*, 1887)
2. Michel Raudzsus (*Frau Sorge*)
3. The gooseherd (*Der Gänsehirt*, 1887)
4. Trude Felshammer (*Geschichte der stillen Mühle*, 1888)
5. Martin Felshammer (*Geschichte der stillen Mühle*)
6. Johannes Felshammer (*Geschichte der stillen Mühle*)
7. The Schrandeners (*Der Katzensteg*, 1889)
8. Indre Balczus (*Die Reise nach Tilsit*, 1917)
9. Ansas Balczus (*Die Reise nach Tilsit*)
10. Busze (*Die Reise nach Tilsit*)
11. Miks Bumbullis (*Miks Bumbullis*, 1917)
12. Alute Lampsatis (*Miks Bumbullis*)
13. Madlyne (*Miks Bumbullis*)
14. Jons Baltruschat (*Jons und Erdme*, 1917)
15. Erdme Maurus (*Jons und Erdme*)
16. Ulele Smailus (*Jons und Erdme*)
17. Katrike (*Jons und Erdme*)
18. Urte (*Jons und Erdme*)
19. Marinke Tamoszus (*Die Magd*, 1917)
20. Jurris Ensky (*Die Magd*)
21. Jozup Wilkat (*Die Magd*)
22. Frau Wilkat (*Die Magd*)
23. Liedtke (*Opfer*, 1921)
24. Schröder (*Opfer*)
25. Karsch (*Opfer*)

Die Reise nach Tilsit (1917)

Taking the first and the main type, we see several examples of these sturdy, deliberate country people in *Die Reise nach Tilsit*, considered by many to be Sudermann's finest work and a classic of *Heimatkunst*. *Die Reise nach Tilsit* deals with the plan of a well-to-do Lithuanian fisherman and his mistress to do away with his wife. The wife, suspecting her husband's intentions, nevertheless accepts her fate with stoic fatalism; only the man's sudden recognition of his folly prevents the murder from being carried out.

This novella concentrates mainly upon the psychological torment of Ansas and Indre on the long journey to Tilsit, and as such, it does not do more than briefly consider the broad and brilliant panorama of peasant life. Basic themes of their existence appear more as the unstated background to the suffering of Indre and the degradation of Ansas. The peasant fascination with material wealth and the acquisition of property is only hinted at in the description of Ansas and Indre, who are primarily portrayed in terms of their industry and success:

> Die stattlichste Wirtschaft von allen ist die, die an der Mündung der Parwe gleichsam die scharfe Ecke bildet, und sie gehört dem Ansas Balczus.[3]

. Indre is also described as an efficient housewife, as hard-working as Ansas:

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[3] Hermann Sudermann, *Die Reise nach Tilsit*, in *Romane und Novellen*, VI (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1930), 5.

> Sie hat ihm drei hübsche Kinder geboren, und sie sorgt für die Wirtschaft, als wäre sie mit der Laime, der freundlichen Göttin, im Bunde. (5)

Thus these peasants appear as a materialistic and industrious people, who project the impression of innocence, even naivety. In all matters concerning their daily work they are usually above reproach; on the other hand only Jons, Erdme and Ulele appear as independent characters. The others tend to be rather passive, allowing stronger wills to guide their every action, such as Ansas yielding to his mistress's plan to murder Indre, Marinke's lack of resistance to the advances of her employer or Miks being prompted by Alute to murder the old forester. Ansas' passivity is also demonstrated by the way his father-in-law forces him not only to dismiss Busze but to beg Indre for forgiveness. Even the details of the murder plot are planned by Busze, who instructs him in all that he is to do to avoid suspicion.

The journey to Tilsit and the hours that Ansas and Indre spend together in town provide unobtrusive clues to the peasants depicted in Sudermann's works. Perhaps the most striking characteristic is the lack of artifice or inhibition. Like children, they take a pure and untroubled delight in anything colourful or new. Sudermann's peasants tend to display a basic wholeness of spirit in contrast to an age rife with intellectual and social alienation. They live for the moment, feel any pleasure with intense gratification and have not yet been "tainted" by bourgeois notions of restraint or adult dignity; thus their response to pain or joy has the spontaneity that stems from the innocence of Eden. Traces of this character trait are obvious in Ansas' easy tears, his inability to deceive, and his tendency to blush when telling a lie. This open and unembarrassed reaction to the slightest emotional stimulus is part of his almost primeval psychology. As Zimmermann puts it:

> Er ist im Grunde ungebrochen in seiner Naivität, es gibt in ihm keine Trennung von innen und aussen, die Reaktion des Unbewussten ist stärker als die bewusste Absicht, und darum misslingt es ihm auch immer wieder, sich zu verstellen ...[4]

In Tilsit itself, the behaviour of Ansas and Indre, confronted with all the startling pleasures of the town, is reminiscent of children on their first picnic. Sudermann shows how even the sick terror Indre feels can be temporarily forgotten when she enters the pastry shop of Dekomin or hears a military band for the first time. Their quite uninhibited response to such delights is contrasted favourably to the disapproval or the kindly superiority of the townspeople.

Part of the beauty of this novella also lies in the description of the close relationship of the peasant with Nature. The peasants here display an unthinking intimacy with all the vagaries of Nature, being wholly dependent on her laws for survival. There is no thought of rebelling against her edicts or of attempting change through technology. Ansas, for example, is perfectly conversant with each wind and each current on the long boat ride down the Memel river to Tilsit. Fatalistic acceptance is a trait common to this type. They are not concerned with Nature's beauty, but rather with the prosperity she may grant or deny them. Their lives are spent in a struggle to extract her bounty in an environment where the soil yields little and the grazing is not abundant. Peasant life in the *Litauischen Geschichten* revolves around Nature's laws. It flows in unhurried rhythms, fitted smoothly into the equally unhurried pace of the seasons. Nothing is wasted or accelerated, nothing occurs before its time. Marriages are set before harvest so that no time may be lost and births do not interfere with work in the fields. As Johannes Klein says about the *Litauischen Geschichten*:

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[4] Werner Zimmermann, *Deutsche Prosadichtungen der Gegenwart*, p. 30.

> Sie fesseln durch das Zuständliche und durch die Landschaft; die Landschaft ist in diesen Menschen, bei denen damals noch Volksmärchen und Volkslieder höchst lebendig waren, ein Stück des persönlichen Lebens, soweit das Persönliche überhaupt ausgebildet ist.[5]

In this timeless realm, life and death co-exist in harmony, each compensating the other. Thus Ansas gives up his life willingly to save Indre, but his death is followed by the birth of his son, symbolizing the perfect reconciliation of Indre and her husband. Tragedy may strike, but life moves on.

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[5] Johannes Klein, *Geschichte der deutschen Novelle* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1954), p. 453.

Another trait touched upon in the *Reise nach Tilsit* is the effortless merging of these peasants into the ancient Lithuanian culture that is intact in these rural areas. They tend to preserve their language and culture, unconsciously absorbing every tradition of music, folklore and superstition till it becomes not culture per se, but rather the enriching foundation of their daily lives. They have a natural gift for music which is revealed, for example, when Ansas and Indre meet the "Dzimken"; the songs they sing with such pleasure are part of a common cultural heritage, known and loved by all.

Related to this is the ability of these peasants to reconcile without difficulty the deep piety of their Christian faith with the far more ancient rituals and beliefs of Lithuanian paganism. Christianity is the undisputed religion that they follow; however, their acceptance of pagan superstitions and pagan deities manages to co-exist peacefully with the Bible as an inalienable part of their lives:

> Diese von starkem persönlichem Gottvertrauen getragene evangelische Frömmigkeit der preussischen Litauer schloss das Weiterleben heidnischer Glaubensvorstellungen keineswegs aus.[1]

Superstition is regarded as hidden truths which only few are foolish enough to ignore. The belief in spirits, fairies and deities which intervene for good or evil in human destinies is inbred in these peasants, who accept the necessity of propitiation to prevent bad luck. In *Miks Bumbullis*, for example, two lovers, returning home after celebrating the pagan festival of Johannisfeuer, discover that a child is missing:

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[1] Helmut Motekat, "Hermann Sudermann's 'Die Reise nach Tilsit,'" in *Hermann Sudermann. Werk und Wirkung*, p. 193.

> Als erster Gedanke stieg dem Grigas auf, dass nur eine der Laumen die Anikke entführt haben könne. Denn dass diese Feen sich mit dem Wegnehmen und Auswechseln von Kindern befassen, auch lange nachdem sie getauft sind, das weiss ja selbst der Dümmste.[7]

Even the Christian faith as practised by these folk is interwoven with pagan ritual, as when Miks recites the Paternoster as a magical charm to ward off capture.

Another important character trait of the peasants is the ambivalent attitude to the Germans who form the upper classes. On the one hand, they feel a certain resentment and envy of the Germans, who are without exception regarded as infinitely superior in every way. This resentment, however, does not conceal their feelings of acute inferiority. Praise coming from a German is thus far more meaningful than similar words spoken by a Lithuanian. Characteristically, the German lady in Tilsit who points out Indre's beauty actually saves her from almost certain death:

> Innerhalb der Dreigliederung (Mordplan und Bootsfahrt nach Tilsit, dortiger Aufenthalt, Heimfahrt und Katastrophe) kommt der mittleren Episodengruppe Wendepunktcharakter zu: Ansas' Liebe zu Indre erwacht neu, als er sieht, wie die Deutschen ihr bewundernd nachblicken.[8]

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[7] Hermann Sudermann, *Miks Bumbullis*, in *Romane und Novellen*, VI (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1930), 43.

[8] Hellmuth Himmel, *Geschichte der deutschen Novelle* (Bern: A. Francke Verlag, 1963), p. 352.

This is the turning-point of the novella, when Ansas puts all thoughts of murder from him once and for all, and the manner in which he willingly gives up his life to save Indre symbolizes not only his penance for his sins but also his peaceful and honorable end:

> Sie rufen und suchen und rufen. Aber sie finden ihn nicht. Nur den umgeschlagenen Kahn finden sie. An dem hatte er sich wohl halten können, aber er ist ihm sicher davongeschwommen, dieweil er die Binsen an Indres Leibe befestigte. Fünf Stunden lang suchen sie, und die Indre liegt auf den Knien und betet um ein Wunder. Aber das Wunder ist nicht geschehen. Zwei Tage später lag er oberwärts friedlich am Strande. (42)

Thus Bennett is mistaken in attributing Ansas' change of heart to "the tenderness and uncomplaining patience of his wife."[1] Ansas, already moved to pride in Indre by the praise of the young German salesman, now sees clearly what he might have lost. The peaceful ending of his life, willingly sacrificed to save his wife, builds the logical conclusion of this tale; Nature's justice and divine law have been satisfied.

Jons und Erdme (1917)

Die Reise nach Tilsit is perhaps Sudermann's best-known work of *Heimatkunst*. However, the lesser-known novella titled *Jons und Erdme* is, on the whole, a far more effective and detailed portrayal of peasant life and values, a story that demonstrates most clearly Sudermann's own perspective of this class type. *Jons und Erdme* is a study of all the aspects of peasant existence; all the themes barely hinted at in the *Reise nach Tilsit* receive careful attention here. The third and longest novella of the four *Litauischen Geschichten*, it elaborates in meticulous detail upon the ceaseless toil, the successes and the sorrow of peasant life on the bleak moors of the Memelland. Every theme touched on in the other novellas returns here with redoubled force, all the more so because it is the story of the struggle of a young peasant couple to survive and make good by dint of sheer back-breaking labour and determination. This in its turn expresses the archetypal struggle of humanity towards progress and happiness, rendered even more effective by the almost tangible presence of the omniscient author who acts as the ironical, kindly observer of the antics of Jons and Erdme. His narrative technique is designed to permit the reader not only to understand the peasant psychology but also to identify with these figures in their turbulent existence. As Motekat puts it:

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[1] E.K. Bennett, *A History of the German 'Novelle'* (Cambridge: University Press, 1934), p. 123.

> Diese unkomplizierte, direkte Erzählweise ist dem Erzählvorhaben als solchem wie der Wesensart der Personen angemessen. Sie erreicht ein hohes Mass an Wahrscheinlichkeit und Glaubwürdigkeit. Nur sie ermöglicht es dem Leser, das Denken und Fühlen der ihrer ganzen Art nach verschlossenen Menschen mitzuerleben; ermöglicht es, hineinblicken zu können in dieser Menschen Probleme, Begierden, Ängste, Freuden und Verzweiflungen, Nöte und Hoffnungen.[10]

Physically, this young couple represents the Sudermann peasant type:

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[10] Helmut Motekat, "Hermann Sudermann's 'Die Reise nach Tilsit'," in *Hermann Sudermann. Werk und Wirkung*, p. 198.

> Er - straff, breit, knorrig, mit wagerechten Trageschultern und zwei Fäusten, die nicht mehr loslassen, wo sie einmal zugepackt haben. Sie - eine richtige Scharwerksmarjell, hochbusig, mit federnden Armen und Schenkeln von Eisen, mit flinkem Halse und blanken Backen, in denen zwei Augen listig und lustig Nähe und Ferne nach Beute durchmustern.[11]

In this description of Jons we see all the strength and inborn stubbornness of the peasants in Sudermann's works. Slow-thinking and deliberate, once he reaches a decision, it is impossible to alter his purpose. Tenacity and an immense capacity for hard work distinguish his character. The portrayal of Erdme, while reinforcing this impression of strength, endurance and bulldog determination in any crisis, also includes the element of sly peasant shrewdness, a natural guile that has little to do with intellectual prowess, but stems rather from a ceaseless struggle for survival.

These traits appear again and again in Sudermann's peasant characters. Even the negative figures possess such qualities of shrewdness, industry and resilience, but they turn them to evil ends. These peasants are conscious of their social and economic handicaps, but through sheer hard work and resourcefulness, they are almost invariably successful in their constant battle with an essentially hostile environment. For Sudermann, Jons and Erdme are:

> Zwei richtige Lebenskämpfer, bereit, dem Schwersten Stand zu halten und das Widrigste mit Schlauheit zu umgehen. (92)

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[11] Hermann Sudermann *Jons und Erdme*, in *Romane und Novellen*, VI (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1930), 92.

Only Indre does not conform to the type in this respect, demonstrating on the whole more refinement and grace. She conforms, however, in all other respects; her industry is stressed and her mental and physical endurance is tested to the utmost in the ordeal of terror on the journey to Tilsit.

In all their dealings, Sudermann's peasants display the same curious combination of child-like naivety and animal shrewdness, even cunning. Their lack of artificial behaviour does not conceal the fact that they are basically practical, thoroughly unsentimental folk who trust no one in matters of money or property, as when the lovers Jons and Erdme count out their savings before marriage, taking great care to keep their earnings separate:

> Nun holen sie rasch ihre Beutelchen vor und breiten die Schätze neben sich aus, geben aber sorgfältig acht, dass beide nicht untereinander geraten. Denn das kann erst nach der Trauung geschehen, wenn die Gütergemeinschaft erklärt ist. (91)

Sentiment has little place in their lives; survival is all. Sudermann's peasants are perfectly capable of deceit, lawlessness or even outright theft; in a decision between profit and a clear conscience, profit always wins. Jons and Erdme steal whatever they cannot afford to buy, even though they feel it is a sin, and the author manages to represent this not as weakness or corruption, but rather the consequence of their child-like logic.

This passion for squirelling away acquisitions is part of the obsessive peasant urge in Sudermann's works to acquire property. For them a life spent in service to others is wasted; self-respect only begins when one acquires and works one's own property. These peasants have this in common with the Junkers in Sudermann's works; they recognize the importance of founding a home and putting down roots, thus achieving stability. From this firm base, they may advance to the dignity of an independent farmer. Nothing is more important than tilling their own soil and treasuring it for future generations. When Jons expresses his doubts about the loss of Erdme's relative security when she marries him, her answer is unequivocal:

> Aber die Erdme beruhigt ihn gleich. Was hat das alles zu sagen gegen einen eigenen Besitz? Denn mit dem Besitzersein fängt das Leben doch erst eigentlich an. (91)

And Marinke Tamoszus (*Die Magd*) expresses a similar view when Jurris admonishes her for working too hard in the garden:

> "Du musst nicht glauben," sagte sie, "dass ich mich zeigen will vor dir oder den Eltern. Aber wenn ich daran denke, dass es vielleicht auch bald *meine* Erde ist, auf der ich da knie, dann wird mir der Abend zum Morgen und die Arbeit zum Spiel."[12]

Nowhere else in the *Litauischen Geschichten* does Sudermann dwell at such length upon the most minute details of peasant labour and in no other work does he display such precise insight into the price exacted in physical and spiritual terms by this unremitting toil. Labour and the struggle to survive are emphasized from beginning to end in this novella. The work ethic dominates the action. From dawn to late in the night, Jons and Erdme work with a stubborn determination that overcomes all their handicaps. Even those peasants like Miks Bumbullis who live on the fringes of the law are capable of leading this hard life. Miks is at first reluctant to settle down, but once the child Anikke lends him a sense of responsibility, he adjusts without effort to the routine of an ordinary peasant:

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[12] Hermann Sudermann, *Die Magd*, in *Romane und Novellen*, VI (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1930), 236.

> Miks Bumbullis war ein umsichtiger Wirt und ein treuer Verwalter. Er arbeitete von früh bis spät und dachte an alles. Die Kartoffeln gediehen, das Heu kam trocken in Käpsen, und als die Roggenaust begann, wurde beim Mähen sein Kreuz nicht müde. In seinem Wesen war eine grosse Veränderung vor sich gegangen. Er trieb sich nicht mehr in den Krügen herum und kam selbst vom Wochenmarkt nüchtern nach Hause. Auch das Wilddieben hatte er aufgegeben, und wenn die Versuchung an ihn herantrat, nachts über die Grenze zu gehen, so sagte er, seine Frau wünsche es nicht. (69-70)

Again and again, Sudermann portrays with admiration the enormous capacity of the peasants for manual labour. It is this strength that enables Jons and Erdme to reach the fateful decision to become independent farmers; it is this same capacity that spurs them on through months of toil, draining the inhospitable land, raising their crops, constructing their cottage, and lends them the confidence to start afresh after the catastrophic flood. These descriptions, it must be emphasized, do not conjure up an image of abject poverty, but rather the vision of a proud, infinitely tenacious people who accept their hard lot and are determined to make good. Jons, who labours the entire day in the sawmill, works through most of the night as well; Erdme, in the same way, is capable of bearing a child and toiling soon after delivery in the fields:

> Am neunten Tag nach der Geburt hat die Erdme schon wieder bis an die Knie im eiskalten Schlamm gestanden. So ein Kerl is die Erdme. (137)

The note of admiration is clear in these words, expressing the inexhaustible reserves of strength enjoyed by the peasants.

This, however, does not imply that Sudermann has not hinted at the weaknesses of these figures. Their child-like behaviour, and easy emotionality, their greed and longing for any treat, such as sweets or gaudy clothes, their capacity for theft and deceit, are all less appealing traits. Erdme, for example, chooses the most attractive pictures in Frau Schlopsnies' attic for her home, but to her, the criterion is colour, not taste:

> Und nun wird die Stube geschmückt! Bild neben Bild geklebt, und die buntesten kriegen die vornehmsten Plätze. (120)

In the same way after the flood, the peasants battle over the gaudiest fripperies sent them by the urban relief organisations, rejecting items that are warm and useful:

> Ein neidisches Hadern erhebt sich um jeden flittrigen Fetzen. Wer was Warmes und Dunkles in Händen hält, fühlt sich verachtet, betrogen. Schandworte fliegen herum, und draussen kommen Tauschgeschäfte zustande, die wohl zehnmal zurückgehen und erst mit sinkender Nacht in einer Tracht Prügel ein Ende nehmen. (181)

Linked to this weakness for cheap or tasteless things is the peasant enjoyment of drinking to mark a festive occasion. Matulis, in his discussion of Lithuanian culture in the prose works of Sudermann and others, feels that

Sudermann portrays the Lithuanians as drinking excessively. According to him, Sudermann overemphasises what is only one facet of the Lithuanian culture in an attempt to express his personal disapproval of drinking:

> On occasion the writer tends to over-emphasize unduly one of the aspects of these native customs - the consumption of intoxicants during the wedding festivities - without the proper realization that this practice is only one of the numerous intrinsic phases of the Lithuanian wedding custom. This over-emphasis of one particular facet elicits an unbalanced mendacious picture of the entire Lithuanian marriage custom. It is quite obvious that in this attitude the writer projects his own personal disapproval of the indulgence in intoxicants, which he postulates to be the source of all evil.[13]

In this matter, Matulis' criticism is not borne out by the text. While Sudermann made no secret of his dislike of excessive drinking, none of the major characters in the *Litauischen Geschichten* ever appear as habitual drinkers. When Ansas goes through a period of heavy drinking, it is clear that it is not his custom, being linked rather to the malignant influence of Busze, his mistress. Sudermann does depict the peasant weakness for drink, but he does not, by any means, dwell upon it, usually ascribing it to a temporary problem within the family. It is significant that most of the real drinking is done on festive occasions like weddings, but it appears as the innocent and whole-hearted enjoyment of the treats and times of relaxation that occur so seldom in an otherwise very difficult life. When Jons consumes too much liquor at Smailus' wedding, it is true that Erdme must lead him home. But their back-breaking labour goes on as usual after the wedding; there is no hint that Jons habitually drinks too much.

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[13] Anatole C. Matulis, *Lithuanian Culture in Modern German Prose Literature* (Vienna: R. Spies & Co., 1966), p. 155.

The emphasis here is therefore not on excessive drinking; the author recognizes the fact that such festivities, rare as they are, provide the only relief for these peasants, deprived of nearly all the luxuries of life. They can look forward to uninhibited pleasure only for a few brief hours before they must return to their daily routine. In the same way, Ansas and Indre become slightly tipsy during their reconciliation in Tilsit, but the author makes it clear that the Germans who criticize them do not understand that it is an unique celebration for the two, a time of euphoric release from terror, suffering and guilt. Thus, while Sudermann does recognize the problems that drinking might cause, he neither over-emphasizes it nor does he demonstrate lack of understanding of the peasant psychology. Such problems of the Sudermann peasant type are generally glossed over in his obviously sympathetic treatment of their problems and hardships.

In *Jons und Erdme*, Sudermann reveals his careful research into all aspects of peasant labour, such as the method of cottage construction upon the highly unstable soil of the moors, the correct way of sowing a potato crop, the system of draining land and rendering it arable, the raising of livestock and the marketing of farm produce, and perhaps most important of all, the unspoken unity of most peasants in a moment of crisis. In *Jons und Erdme* the "Talka" appears for the first time, the impromptu association of workers that springs up whenever a neighbour is in need of help:

> "Talka" heisst auf Deutsch "Arbeitergesellschaft", und auf solchen gemeinsamen Hilfeleistungen beruht vieles, was unter diesen armen Menschen, die gemietete Hände niemals bezahlen könnten, an Tüchtigem zustandekommt. Dafür erweist man sich dann später dankbar, wenn der Ruf an einen selber ergeht, und alles schliesst mit einer fröhlichen Bewirtung, so viel oder so wenig der Bittende zu geben vermag.
>
> (104-5)

The "Talka" is the clearest expression of peasant unity in Sudermann's works, where these men and women combine their resources to overcome the common handicap of poverty. It is also an example of the inherent ingenuity and strength displayed by Sudermann's peasants. Where the individual considers it difficult, if not impossible, to perform a task, he or she will always find a way around it. In extending this resourcefulness throughout the community, we see that the tight-knit fabric of peasant life is an intricate system of mutual assistance and support at times of trouble. No act of kindness, however insignificant, goes unnoticed. The help that Witkuhn renders Jons and Erdme, the inexperienced new-comers, is repaid when Erdme not only neglects her own work to come to the aid of his sick wife, but also forces the village outcast to rescue him during the flood. Ulele's kindness is also repaid when Erdme comforts her unhappy stepmother in her absence. Even their mode of address ("Nachbar") is a clue to the intimacy of this social bond between the peasants, whose only support comes from their own kind.

The acute need for such mutual assistance is made especially clear in the portrayal, most detailed in this novella, of the beauty and danger of Nature. From the very beginning, life is a constant battle to subdue and wrest a living from her. In *Jons und Erdme*, this struggle, and the puny ineffectualness of human existence in contrast to Nature's awesome power, appear as the main theme. Nature is the true antagonist in *Jons und Erdme*, never conquered, always dangerous. The lives of these peasants depend on her whim, and the very intensity of their work lends them a special relationship with their environment. Every success is a personal victory, each good crop a joy. Every aspect of their daily lives revolves around Nature's timeless and steady cycle. They greet her brutality with stoic fortitude and her bounty with relief and gratitude. It is no coincidence that Erdme instinctively compares the size of a potato in their first crop to the fists of the infant she carries within her. The happiness she feels in regarding a successful crop is not at all unlike the delight taken by a parent in a growing child:

> Ein Glück ist noch, dass die Kartoffeln gedeihen. Wie andere heimlich nach einem vergrabenen Schatze sehen, ob er noch da ist, so geht sie wohl dreimal am Tage zum Acker und kuckt sich erst um, ob niemand am Weg ist, und dann kniet sie rasch nieder und scharrt an *der* Stelle und jener, nicht mehr, als ein Hündchen mit dem Vorderfuss klaut, - und siehe da! überall sagt ihr ein junges Knollchen: "Labsriets" und "da bin ich". - Jetzt sind sie wie Walnüsse so gross und nach vierzehn Tagen schon, wie Katrikes künftige Fäustchen sein werden, und so wachsen sie immer noch weiter. (123)

An essential part of the peasant psychology in Sudermann's works is the importance of the Christian faith. The authority of the pastors is as strong as that of the Moorvogt. On the other hand, while the devotion of these peasants is absolute, it does not interfere with their determination to do whatever must be done to ensure their survival. Nowhere is this point better made than in the author's sardonic description of the reaction of Jons and Erdme to the speech of the pastor at their wedding. While moved to tears by his rhetoric, and fiercely determined to adhere to all the Christian virtues, they must leave early in order to steal some timber to construct their cottage:

> Jons und Erdme weinen sehr, und jeder von ihnen schwört sich zu, die Ermahnungen des Pfarrers nicht zu vergessen. Als aber die Zeugen ihre drei Schnäpse erhalten haben und es dunkel zu werden beginnt, da müssen sie doch daran gehen, den vierten der Stämme aus dem Walde zu holen, denn jeder Tag Aufschub kann von Nachteil sein. (100)

The pangs of guilt that they feel are soon soothed by the pious resolve to later make good their theft. In the same manner, the excessive piety of the Taruttis couple is regarded by Jons and Erdme with impatience, not on religious grounds, but because their habit of spending the precious working hours of Sunday in prayer seems to the young couple as a pure waste of time which could be better spent in the fields:

> Frommsein ist gewiss eine schöne und notwendige Sache, aber man muss Zeit dazu haben. Sonst wird es zur Landplag'. (98)

Thus while religion is as essential and as natural as bread to these peasants, it has its specific time, place and function. The incessant demands of a life of ceaseless toil must always take precedence over the sometimes unreasonable moral statements of the Christian faith.

It is due to the importance of their cultural heritage that Christianity manages to co-exist peacefully with the far older traditions of Lithuanian paganism. This ancient culture with its rich stock of music, superstition and folklore provides the fruitful basis upon which the Christian faith progresses without conflict. The knowledge of these traditions is handed down from generation to generation, forging an unifying and stable spiritual heritage which is second nature to the peasants. The unconscious instinct for music and folklore is demonstrated by the visit of Jons and Erdme to a local official to ask for tiles. When he inquires whether they can sing, it is significant that the couple break into spontaneous laughter. That one can ask about the existence of a gift that is so natural to them appears wholly hilarious to Jons and Erdme:

> Sie verstehen seine Frage erst nicht, obwohl er litauisch spricht, beinahe so gut wie sie selber. Zweimal muss er sie wiederholen. Da erst lachen sie hell auf.
>
> *Ob* sie singen können!
>
> "Könnt ihr auch Märchen erzählen?"
>
> Fünfhundert können sie erzählen. Tag und Nacht und noch einmal Tag und Nacht lang können sie erzählen. (116)

The intimate relationship to their heritage is displayed also in the way these peasants sing to express their deepest emotions. In a culture not yet attuned to the written word, their lives and passions still find true expression in song, such as Madlyne singing to relieve her heart of the pain of her unrequited love for Miks Bumbullis or the joyful chorus of Ansas and Indre, drifting by twilight down the river in a dream-like haze of happiness. Or as Matulis puts it in rather purple prose:

> These Lithuanian folk songs are the most outstanding means by which Lithuaniahs express their emotions, be it their joys or sorrows. They are also their national strength, helping them to survive the darkest hours of their fate. They are their most cherished native treasure from which they do not wish to part. As long as a Lithuanian rests from the fatiguing struggle of his life in his native meadows or walks pensively through foreign lands, his folk songs shall continue to be sung and heard.[14]

Another interesting aspect of the peasant type as depicted by Sudermann is their relationship to the upper-classes and the bureaucracy. With the Lithuanians, the upper echelons of society tend to be almost entirely German:

> Eine besondere Färbung erhielt diese soziale Schichtung in Ostpreussen dadurch, dass im allgemeinen die Deutschen die Oberschicht, die Fremdsprachigen die Unterschicht bildeten. Deutsch waren die Beamten, die die Landesherrschaft repräsentierten, die Gerichte, die Kaufleute und Handwerker der Städte, die Gutsbesitzer auf dem Lande. Sie waren der formende, prägende, führende Teil der Bevölkerung.[15]

Though the peasants appear rather suspicious of the Germans, regarding them as quite alien in their behaviour, the general attitude is one of envy and admiration. While they may resent the cavalier outlook of the Germans, expressed sometimes in derogatory remarks about the Lithuanians, they feel that the average German personifies culture and refinement. From the lowly tradesman to the middle classes, the Germans represent a level of polish and panache that is envied by these peasants, who have no other terms of reference. Thus while they resent the highhandedness of the Germans in imposing foreign laws upon them, e.g. Ensky's anger at a law that totally ignores time-honoured Lithuanian customs (*Die Magd*), they also cannot help but feel that social advancement is synonymous with assimilation into the German culture.

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[14] Anatole C. Matulis, *Lithuanian Culture in Modern German Prose Literature*, p. 93.

[15] Fritz Gause, "Die ostpreussische Heimat Hermann Sudermanns - Kultur und Geist", in *Hermann Sudermann. Ein Dichter an der Grenzscheide zweier Welten. Der Wegweiser*, 33, 1958, 105.

On the other hand, it is an interesting fact that Sudermann invariably portrays the German bureaucracy, upper classes and those professionals who have daily contact with the peasants as shrewd but benevolent guardians of the social order. This trait is repeated from the figure of the Moorvogt, who has devoted his life to the welfare of those peasants under him, to the doctor who spends the entire night without complaint at Erdme's side during her labour, and, well aware of their poverty, only demands three marks in payment:

> Nachher, wie er gehen will, dreht der Jons demütig die Mütze in der Hand und fragt ihn, was es wohl kostet.
>
> Da sieht er sich in der Stube um, besieht den grünbunten Schrank und den goldrahmigen Spiegel und sagt: "Nun, nun, ihr scheint ja ganz wohlhabende Leute zu sein. Gebt mir also" - der Erdme steht das Herz still vor Angst - "gebt mir also - drei Mark."
>
> (131)

Even Herr Westphal (*Die Magd*), who has fathered a child with Marinke, makes no attempt to avoid responsibility, but gives her a cheque for ten thousand marks to see that it is cared for.

The classic example of this benevolence is, of course, the Moorvogt. The absolute ruler of these Lithuanian peasants of the moor colony, he reveals a characteristic combination of compassion and stern justice. He is by no means a starry-eyed idealist concerning the peasants; he understands exactly their ability to steal and lie. As in the case of Jons and Erdme, he is not deceived by any of their excuses and is well aware of their many thefts during the period of construction. His behaviour is characteristic; he watches closely their progress as hard-working farmers and helps them as much as he can, as when he deliberately omits to remind them of overdue rent payments. When he is certain, however, that they are firmly established and will survive, he refuses to lease them any more land until they bring their affairs into order. Thus, while the Moorvogt does not coddle the peasants under his jurisdiction, he nevertheless does all in his power to smooth the way for them. This combination of unsentimental justice and astringent kindness leads Jons and Erdme to regard him as a human equivalent of God, whom none can successfully deceive and whose rule is stern but fair.

On the whole, the Lithuanian peasant's attitude to the German bureaucracy and upper classes is sometimes one of resentment and incomprehension, but always one of intense envy. The Germans themselves are portrayed by the author as overwhelmingly positive, dedicated to the welfare of the peasants. They are never deceived by peasant guile but do their utmost to guide and encourage them. The relationship between the two races in this respect is very much a paternal, benevolent one of social superior and inferior, of parent and child, rather than of public servant and citizen.

In another respect, however, Sudermann depicts the contact of Lithuanian peasant with German culture very differently. In the *Litauischen Geschichten*, the steady and harmonious cycle of rural life is favourably contrasted to the moral and social decay of the towns. Where these country folk come into contact with urban stresses, the end result is an alienation from their traditions of loyalty, piety and hard work. Mathers feels that:

> Sudermann often seems impelled to place some sort of alien superstructure upon the action of his East Prussian characters as if to indicate that their salvation lies not in eternal struggle with their harsh and bitter homeland, but rather in escape, i.e. by material gain or by actual physical escape.[16]

This, however, does not hold true for later works such as the *Litauischen Geschichten*, where the corruption and decay of urban ideas are contrasted to the stability of the rural population. Even the cultural heritage, treasured for generations, is lost in the tragic but apparently inevitable trend towards assimilation and modernization. Ulele, for example, is determined to make her fortune in town; the first step is changing her name to the more German and therefore more acceptable Adele. Erdme even forbids her daughters to speak Lithuanian; to progress socially, she feels that they must master German:

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[16] Rodney Mathers, "Sudermann and the Critics. An Analysis of the Criticism of Sudermann's Works and of his Revolt against the Literary Criticism of his Time", p. 19.

> Und die Erdme spricht auch nur noch Deutsch mit ihnen, denn sie sollen ja in die weite Welt hinaus, dorthin, wo die Menschen nicht einmal wissen, dass es Litauer gibt. (160)

The younger generation in *Jons und Erdme* is no longer content with the life of grinding toil led by their parents. They are dissatisfied with their inferior social status and limited prospects and regard an urban existence, however menial, as the height of glamour. Some, like Erdme's daughters, are encouraged by their parents to seek out this change. Others, like Ulele, are spurred on by personal ambition to achieve something more than a lifetime of manual labour. While Ulele, however, never quite loses touch with the traditions of her people, Erdme's daughters provide a tragic example of the crumbling of the peasant community in the rural areas. Taught to regard themselves as too well born for the life of peasant women, they reject as worthless anything to do with this existence. Alien to them too are the concepts of unselfishness, gratitude and loyalty, all so essential for the peasant way of life. This is best seen in their surprise and uncomprehending amusement when confronted with the pietistic values of Taruttis.

The clearest example of the malignant influence of urban decay on peasant tradition is seen in the figure of Urte. She leaves home early for the heady delights of the city and returns years later as the messenger of destruction, bringing about the separation of her parents and their total financial ruin. In the same way, Katrike chooses to set her obsessive dream about marriage with a German above the welfare of her parents. Sudermann has condensed the entire cultural disintegration of the world of the peasant into the brilliant scene of contract negotiations with the seedy bridegroom and the eventual betrayal of Erdme by her cherished daughters. The peasant world is portrayed by the author as a Garden of Eden, fragile in the extreme, surviving as long as it remains isolated from social stresses. The most natural instincts of loyalty to one's kin, of pride in one's heritage, are destroyed by the impact of an urban world that scoffs at such values.

The dog Petrouschka is a symbol of all that is artificial in this environment. When she arrives as Urte's pet at the crude cottage of Jons and Erdme, her first reaction is one of total rejection of the discomfort and lack of refinement around her. In the course of the action, however, she rejects Urte and freely accepts Jons as her master. As her exquisite coat darkens due to the dirt of her surroundings, the natural instincts of a dog, stifled by the artificiality of her previous existence, respond with delight to the taciturn kindness of Jons. Petrouschka is no longer a social ornament; she is now required to be a dog and to give her master the loyalty that no one in the life she left behind cared about.

Diametrically opposite to Petrouschka's recognition of the joy that lies hidden in this rough life, is the rejection by Urte and Katrike of these same values as meaningless. The dog, accustomed to an empty existence, instinctively chooses what is enduring; the women, raised in the stable, close-knit traditions of peasant life, reject it in favour of a sterile and alien society that not only exploits them but leads them in turn to exploit those to whom they owe their loyalty.

The novella closes with Jons and Erdme reunited after the betrayal by their daughters. It is a measure of the resilience of the Sudermann peasant type that, although ruined, they face with dour determination the daunting prospect of beginning all over again in middle age:

> "Ach Gott," sagt er, "das Vieh ist ja weg und viel von dem Hausrat und alles Gesparte" - wie er sagt "alles Gesparte", da schluckt er doch, und ihr zerreisst es das Herz - , "aber die schönen Gebäude sind da, und die Wiese haben wir auch, und die Kartoffeln gedeihen - und der Moorvogt sagt: 'Das Pferd wird sich finden,' und fürs übrige leiht er. Wir fangen eben noch einmal von vorne an, das ist alles." Wie er das sagt, da kommt die Erdme sich wieder ganz jung vor. (223-24)

Thus the novella concludes upon an optimistic note that emphasizes the ability of Jons and Erdme to survive and fight on back to success. *Jons und Erdme*, more than any other work by Sudermann, is a paean to the peasant in his strengths and weaknesses, in his slyness and innocence, and above all, in his stubborn resilience.

Die Reise nach Tilsit

The peasant type portrayed in a negative light reveals strikingly similar traits, from Michel Raudzsus (*Frau Sorge*) to Jozup Wilkat, who appears thirty years later in *Die Magd*. These men are dangerous, iron-willed characters, usually depicted in triangular personality configurations as a contrast to more positive figures, such as Jozup, Jurris and Marinke (*Die Magd*), Busze, Ansas and Indre (*Die Reise nach Tilsit*) and Alute, Miks and Madlyne (*Miks Bumbullis*). An example of this negative type is the figure of Busze, the beautiful and malevolent maid who wreaks havoc in the Balczus household. Appropriately enough, Sudermann introduces her through her laughter that echoes above the sound of the Balczus children weeping over the suffering of their mother:

> Und manchmal mischt sich auch ein Lachen darein, ein gar nicht gutes Lachen, hart wie Glas und schadenfroh wie Hähergeschrei. (6)

To make the point quite clear, the author remarks that the devil has brought Busze into this house. Busze displays every characteristic of the negative peasant type. She is an immensely hardworking woman, ruthless to the core and completely determined to get her own way. Her beauty captivates Ansas, but it is her iron will that truly enslaves the defenceless man. She is a primeval force of Nature, unencumbered by any scruples or ethics. The natural guile of the peasant becomes in her the very essence of cunning, and the equally natural strength to evil. As Helmut Motekat puts it:

> Eine junge Frau wie Busze lebt und handelt aus einer ganz uneingeschränkten elementaren Kraft natürlichen Seins. Sie tut unreflektiert aus ihrer ungebrochenen Ganzheit das, was ihr Trieb ihr befiehlt, ohne Rücksicht auf sich selbst oder andere. Ihre Liebe muss sich erfüllen, und wer sie hindern will, "muss fort", muss sterben. In ihrer Hingabe wie in ihrer Zielstrebigkeit ist sie beides in einem: ganz Liebe, Trieb, Hochmut und Selbsterniedrigung, Hass und erbarmungsloser Wille, der nur sein Ziel kennt.[17]

While Motekat is accurate in describing Busze as wholly ruthless, his view of her as capable of love seems unjustified, given the text. There is no sign that Busze loves, or is capable of loving Ansas. On the contrary, she is attracted not only by his relative prosperity (confirmed by Ane Doczene) but also by his malleability. At no point in the novella do we see any positive aspect of her character apart from her undeniable industry (which in a sense is only a manifestation of her insatiable need to dominate all around her). The love actually stems from Ansas, who allows his mistress to manipulate him further and further on the path of degradation and almost to the point of murder. One example of Busze's quite instinctive brutality is her immediate and violent response to the blow delivered by Indre's infuriated father:

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[17] Helmut Motekat, "Hermann Sudermann's 'Die Reise nach Tilsit'," in *Hermann Sudermann. Werk und Wirkung*, p. 192.

> Und was tut sie? Sie packt den alten Mann, zieht ihn vom Wagen und fängt ihn mit den Fäusten zu verprügeln an. Der Kutscher springt vom Bock, der Ansas Balczus kommt aus dem Hause gestürzt, und beiden Männern zusammen gelingt es erst, ihn der wütenden Frauensperson zu entreissen. Weiss Gott, sie hätte ihn sonst vielleicht umgebracht. (8-9)

Busze's plan to murder Indre not only proves her calculating ruthlessness but also the hold she has over Ansas. Her questions about an opportunity to kill her rival resemble, as Matulis describes them "the dangerous web of a spider, which is spun slowly around its victim".[18] As with Sudermann's other negative characters, Busze thus represents the depths to which the human spirit can sink when wholly unhampered by moral scruples.

Miks Bumbullis (1917)

A similar figure is that of Alute Lampsatis in the novella *Miks Bumbullis*. Like Busze, she is an extremely efficient woman, who fears very little and is capable of even murder to satisfy her primitive urges. *Miks Bumbullis* concerns the downfall of a young poacher through love, superstition and guilt. Alute is represented here as the force that drives Miks on his solitary way to murder; she invents the tale that acquits him of his crime; it is she who murders the child Miks cherishes; and it is eventually Alute who betrays him to the law which will condemn him to death for his crime. Her absolute evil is contrasted to the loyalty and love of Madlyne, the innocence of Anikke and even to the basic decency of Miks who sincerely attempts to make amends for the murder of the old forester. As in the case of Busze, Alute shares the peasant traits of courage and diligence, but the native shrewdness of the country folk is transformed in her into cunning and cruelty.

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[18] Anatole C. Matulis, *Lithuanian Culture in Modern German Prose Literature*, p. 52.

Miks Bumbullis is the sole novella in the *Litauischen Geschichten* in which evil triumphs over good, illustrated with primitive force in Alute's demoniac dance of joy around the captive Miks. Paul Fechter describes this total abandon in passion as a characteristic of Sudermann's Lithuanian women who:

> ... noch etwas von dem heidnisch Masslosen haben, das vom Pruzzischen her auch im Preussischen fortlebt.[11]

Alute recognizes no doctrine except that of the survival of the fittest. To gain her way, she destroys everything that might hinder her; thus Anikke dies by poison, most of her short life spent in misery, Miks ends in prison as a condemned man, Madlyne is doomed to a lifetime of guilt; but Alute, with whom everything begins and ends, survives triumphant.

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[11] Paul Fechter, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur*, III (Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut A.G., 1938), 91.

Die Magd (1917)

The menacing figures of the mother and son in this novella are also identical to the negative type. Jozup Wilkat's appearance is designed to reinforce the impression of brooding menace:

> Ein dunkler junger Mensch von Dreiviertelgrösse mit buschigem Schnurrbart und zusammengewachsenen Brauen, die ihm ein finsteres und fremdartiges Aussehen gaben. (228)

Like Busze or Alute, he knows no bounds in love and hate and has no scruples in taking what he wants. His love for Marinke expresses itself more in violence than in tenderness, and when it turns to hate, his rejection is as extreme as his former affection. Jozup's mother (referred to appropriately enough as the "Wölfin"), is similar to her son, being prone to violence and vicious rages. Her malevolence even extends to using poison against her hated daughter-in-law. However, even this sinister couple are described as highly efficient and hardworking farmers, who run a property that is "wohlhabend and gutgehalten".

Opfer (1921)

A curious fact that emerges from this analysis is that Sudermann's portrayal of the peasant tends to isolate him to a great extent from the turbulent social forces of the time. Before and during World War I, the clearest indication of these forces affecting the peasants lay in their gradual loss of traditional values and often their cultural identity. Assimilation into the urban centres sometimes brought material success, but more often had a destabilising effect on the close bonds of family. These peasants are self-sufficient creatures, wrapped up in their daily work and displaying little interest in employing any technological innovation. Indre (*Die Reise nach Tilsit*) shows no interest in seeing the first railway in the area; and when she finally sets eyes on a train, her reaction is that of horror and delight, exactly like that of a child. The actual social and economic implications of the introduction of a railway into the district are lost on her. The world of these peasants thus appears isolated, almost dream-like, neatly divided into sacred social levels that no one dares to tamper with. Authority is benign but stern, and there is no question of defying it.

On the other hand, Sudermann's portrayal of the peasant's social attitudes undergoes an unmistakeable change after the damage dealt to the national psyche by the war. His dramatic trilogy *Das deutsche Schicksal*, written from the post-war perspective in 1921, accurately depicts a race in the grip of a war hysteria that three years later is transformed into resentment in many levels of the populace against the incompetence of the military government and the seemingly endless restrictions placed upon them. In *Opfer*, the second of these plays, Sudermann analyses the effect of this anger on the population in the rural areas.

The peasants in *Opfer* are very different from the essentially naive, child-like, peaceable folk of Sudermann's earlier works. These are people who have fought in the trenches or have lost husbands and sons to the war. Their innocence is gone, and their traditional reverence for the authority of bureaucrat, landlord and gendarme is fast disappearing. The respect taken for granted before 1914 is now unwilling and no longer tinged with the almost superstitious awe of power and wealth that the earlier characters felt, e.g. the timidity of Jons and Erdme in the presence of the Moorvogt. It is significant, for example, that the landlord Westphal (*Die Magd*) is referred to by the peasants as "Wieszpatis", meaning "König und Herrscher" (243), whereas in *Opfer* a peasant and war veteran is capable of openly threatening an unpleasant officer with murder.

The peasants in *Opfer* now argue with higher authority and even offer open defiance. The trauma of the war has shattered the traditional structure of society and raised their consciousness to the level of citizens suddenly aware of their civil rights. When the Landrat appeals to them to raise their quotas, only one army veteran agrees, much against his will. The other men and women resist, stubbornly maintaining their right to farm as they please and to dispose of their produce without the control of the war government. The helplessness of the bureaucracy when confronted with this new and mutinous attitude is ironically portrayed. An interesting point is the unconscious and instinctive solidarity of these peasants against the interference of men like Dr. Albers. Even a character like Skura, a dealer on the black market, regarded as a criminal by the authorities, finds support among them. Whatever his faults, and while they have no particular liking for him, he is one of them. The searching of Skura's house and his actual arrest therefore create total chaos among the peasants at the meeting. In Liedtke's words:

> Mechten Se uns nich jleich alle festnehmen lassen, Herr Landrat? ... Draussen um de janze Welt ein grosser Schützengraben und drinne ein grosses Gefängnis - Das is denn das deutsche Vaterland![20]

And Liedtke, "der sich an dem eigenen Widerstand berauscht" (204), totally rejects the authority that men like Walter and Albers represent in words that would have been unthinkable before 1914:

> Wenn aber der *Herr Landrat* hier den lieben Jott spielt und sagt: Eigentum is verboten und Handeltreiben is verboten und Sattfressen is verboten - und Luftholen is womöglich auch noch verboten, dann frag' ich: Wer is der Herr Landrat, dass er sich so was vermessen tut? ... (204)

Traces of the old instinctive respect are still visible in the obvious reluctance of the peasants to sit down in the presence of the Landrat and the lady of the manor, but this lack of social assurance is all that is left of the old peasant naivety. Significantly, Sudermann employs dialect here for his peasant figures, thus demonstrating the end of the timeless idealization of the *Litauischen Geschichten* where the peasants spoke with classical simplicity and held to ancient traditions of order and obedience.

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[20] Hermann Sudermann, *Opfer*, in *Dramatische Werke*, VI (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1923), 203.

SUMMARY

On the whole, a close reading of the *Litauischen Geschichten* and earlier works reveals a robust picturesqueness in Sudermann's perspective of the peasant type. As Hubert Walter describes Sudermann's peasants:

> Starke, erdgebundene Menschen schritten über den grossch°lligen Lehmboden, stiernackig die Männer, wiegenden Ganges die Frauen mit den breitausladenden Hüften. [...] Gar nicht genug tun kann sich Sudermann in der Schilderung solchen vollsaftigen Menschentums. [...] Ich möchte ihn hier einen aus der malerisch-mythischen in die dichterisch-bäuerliche Ebene versetzten Rubens nennen.[21]

Certain character traits are unchanged in his description as far back as the collection of short stories *Im Zwielicht*. In *Sie Lächelt*, Sudermann compares the natural impulses of the peasants to the banal existence led by the upper classes, where the least sign of genuine feeling is regarded as ill-bred and rather embarrassing for all concerned:

> Da lob' ich mir das Bauernvolk im Hinterwald, im Hochgebirge. Das prügelt, das schimpft, das liebt, das sticht mit Messern um sich, und ist so roh wie möglich, aber es schluckt nichts in sich hinein und ertötet nichts in seiner Brust. Es kann sich austoben. Und das hat seinen grossen Vorteil! Wenn es wahr ist, dass das Glück auf den ungestörten Entfaltung der Persönlichkeit beruht, so ist dort der Hochsitz irdischer Wonnen.[22]

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[21] Hubert Walter, *Sudermann und die Franzosen*, p. 102.

[22] Hermann Sudermann, *Im Zwielicht*, in *Romane und Novellen*, IV (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1930), 66.

Therefore the peasant in Sudermann's portrayal appears as generally untainted by artificial modes of thought and behaviour and feels no inhibitions in giving full rein to his emotions. They are children of Nature whose personalities have not been hampered in development, a quality that Sudermann obviously admires. As Hubert Walter puts it:

> Die auf dem Lande noch herrschende gesunde Sinnlichkeit gefiel ihm. Das Triebleben war hier noch nicht raffiniert überfeinert und seinem natürlichen Zwecke zuwider ein Mittel zur Aufpeitschung überreizter Nerven geworden.[23]

A similar view is expressed in the story *Der Gansehirt*, in which the heroine points out that the differences between aristocrat and peasant are fundamental and less a matter of birth than of breeding. While she envies the gooseherd's freedom, she recognizes years later that his peasant simplicity sets him worlds apart from her own ingrained views on dignity and honour. The gooseherd, however, has no interest in such ideas; his complete lack of embarrassment in expecting payment for aiding his erstwhile playmate proves more than anything else the uncomplicated relationship of such people to their environment. Oakes' claim that Sudermann displays sympathy for the gooseherd who "had to go away out on the moor day after day, lonely and forsaken"[24] is quite unjustified. This peasant boy in Sudermann's portrayal is a phlegmatic, amiable child whose main interest in his aristocratic little playmate is the food she brings him, and even physical punishment is greeted by him with unshakable calm.

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[23] Hubert Walter, *Sudermann und die Franzosen*, p. 102.

[24] Francis Coram Oakes, "Autobiographical Elements in Hermann Sudermann's Novels", p. 52.

Where politics or social exploitation wreak havoc, Sudermann's peasant characters are depicted with a certain sympathy, e.g. the Schrandeners in *Der Katzensteg*, who were tormented for years by their feudal lord, and have been reduced by sudden freedom to total anarchy and degradation. In strength, endurance and simplicity, only Regina displays all the typical traits of the Sudermann peasant type. Her instincts too are unhampered by any excessive reflection or artificiality. As Günter Heintz says:

> Eben weil sie jenen "Bruch von Geist" nicht kennt, der in Kleists Aufsatz über das Marionettentheater eine so wesentliche Rolle spielt, und dies für die gesamte Zeit ihrer Romanexistenz gilt, sie durchaus ganz naiv, spontan und anrührend ist, darf Regine als die einzige gelungene und überzeugende Gestalt des Werkes angesehen werden.[25]

This characteristic is apparent in nearly every peasant in Sudermann's works. The type itself runs to two categories: the negative and the positive figures. The latter are in the majority and are portrayed in a primarily favourable light that draws a kindly veil over even their faults. Their spontaneity and resilience are constantly emphasized with personal remarks in the text on the part of the author. For Spiero they are:

> ... in Liebe und Hass unbeherrschten, vom christlichen Sittengesetz nicht oder nur flüchtig

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[25] Günter Heintz, "Kompromiss und Wirkung: Kritische Anmerkungen zu Hermann Sudermanns 'Der Katzensteg'," in *Hermann Sudermann. Werk und Wirkung*, p. 203.

> gestreiften Naturkinder ...[26]

The negative characters appear as rapacious, demoniac men and women, who will seize whatever they desire and will even murder to defend what thay feel are their prerogatives, such as Frau Wilkat's attempt to poison not only Marinke but also her child. However, without an exception, even these characters are depicted as hard workers whose efficiency cannot be faulted.

On the whole, Sudermann's portrayal of his peasants reveals a certain ambivalence. On the one hand, his description of their lives and their ceaseless toil is grittily and poignantly realistic, as when he speaks of the sweat that pours into Erdme's eyes during the hours of labour in the fields, the prolonged agony of childbirth during which the expectant mother bursts into tears over the fear that they cannot pay the doctor's fees, the deadly danger of the flood and the acid burns of the moor mud. On the other hand, these peasants also appear curiously idealized, existing almost in a state of grace. Integrated completely into the eternal cycle of the seasons and village life, they are part of Nature, not apart. In their innocence, the very integrity of thought and behaviour is enhanced into archetypal patterns of folklore and magic. The *Litauischen Geschichten* fully bear out Sudermann's statement in his autobiography that:

> Wir leben *immer* im Märchen, nur merken wir's

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[26] Heinrich Spiero, *Deutsche Köpfe* (Darmstadt: Ernst Hoffmann & Co., 1927), p. 267.

> selten.[27]

As such, the use of classically simple German, while adjusted to the rhythms of the peasant tongue, helps to underline the timeless aspect of their existence. The essential importance of the *Litauischen Geschichten* as a work that penetrates and analyses such archetypal motifs was not lost on Franz Werfel, who wrote:

> Nach wie vor halte ich aber die 'Litauischen Geschichten' für ein ganz grosses und bleibendes Meisterwerk der deutschen Literatur. Als ich es gelesen hatte, war ich ganz erschüttert und verwundert darüber, dass in unserer Zeit ein wahrhaft mythologisches Buch geschrieben werden konnte, mit wirklichen Göttern und Urgestalten, wie sie heute noch in Litauen leben, eine Gegenwarts-Mythologie also, echt und kontrollierbar, nicht die fatzkenhafte Phantastik irgendeines modernen 'Mythos'-Schöpfers.[28]

Sudermann's peasants appear to inhabit a basically harmonious social sphere, one that is far removed from more than mere intimations of conflict. A change in perspective is only apparent after the war with the seething peasants of *Opfer* suddenly awaking to a new realization of their rights as citizens. In *Opfer*, the peaceful order of the *Litauischen Geschichten* is gone forever, a world in which the peasant accepted his lot, in which the landlord was almost identified with God and where endurance was all.

The author's attitude to his peasant characters is in itself not that of an equal discussing equals; it is very much the perspective of a social superior, an educated man who with a loving eye records the doings of these simple folk. His benevolence and obvious admiration for his peasants is that of a scholar who has created, especially in the *Litauischen Geschichten*, a sincere tribute to the enduring spirit of these people. What comes to light here is the author's love for these characters, but also the absence of true personal identification. The social gulf between the writer and the type is almost tangible, and most evident in the affectionate irony with which he depicts the guile and odd innocence of these peasants. There is none of the equality that may be detected in Sudermann's treatment of the Junker class and Matulis ascribes this lack of complete affinity with the Lithuanian peasants to a belated acquaintance with the Lithuanian spirit.[29]

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[27] Hermann Sudermann, *Das Bilderbuch meiner Jugend* (München: Langen Müller, 1981), p. 131.

[28] Franz Werfel, cited in "Hermann Sudermann - Portrait und Selbstportrait," in *Marbacher Magazin*, 10 (1978), 29.

In the final analysis, Sudermann's positive portrayal of the peasant characters in his works seems based upon an idealistic view of their fundamental innocence. As such, the portrayal of the peasants fits without difficulty into the larger mosaic of Sudermann's poetic vision, being a tribute to the infinite tenacity of the human spirit. In it, he celebrates yet again their special qualities of innocence and courage, in other words, the essential humanity of these people. His peasants are children with the bodies and desires of adults, but with all the spontaneity and innocent greed of children. In their blithe harmony of spirit, they represent the distance that lies between Sudermann the wealthy and controversial writer and the Sudermann who was born a brewer's son in a tiny village in the Memelland. It is this rural idyll that he attempts to recapture in the peasants of the *Litauischen Geschichten* and other works.

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[29] Anatole C. Matulis, *Lithuanian Culture in Modern German Prose Literature*, p. 157.

V. THE JEWS

The image of the Jew in German literature has undergone certain transformations, from an early incarnation of evil to the idealized figure of the Enlightenment as in Lessing's *Die Juden* and *Nathan der Weise*, an idealization which Meyer ascribes to the inability of this movement to exclude a minority from its aims.[1] The literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries reveals the presence of many Jewish characters, both positive and negative, along with more ambivalent figures, such as that of Moritz Freudenstein in Raabe's *Hungerpastor*, the wealthy Jews of Fontane's *Der Stechlin* or the unscrupulous merchant in Freytag's *Soll und Haben*.

The Jewish figures in the works of Hermann Sudermann constitute a relatively small group that reflects the fluctuating fortunes and social attitudes of Germany itself. They range from the rural moneylender in *Frau Sorge* (1887) to the businessman Samuel in Sudermann's last major novel *Purzelchen* (1928), a timespan of about 41 years. Within this category, Sudermann provides an insight into the problematic situation, the changing image and the complex emotions of the German Jews as he saw them, in the rural and urban context, in the *Grossbürgertum* and in the lower strata of

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[1] Michael A. Meyer, *The Origins of The Modern Jew. Jewish Identity and European Culture in Germany, 1749-1824* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1967), p. 15.

society. His depiction of these types also deals by necessity with their reaction to the antisemitism that surrounds them and thus with the stereotypes associated with these figures. Sudermann's portrayal of the Jewish characters therefore forms an important segment of *Zeit- und Kulturgeschichte*. It provides us not only a glimpse of his view of the predicament of the German Jew, trapped between his racial identity and his love for his country, but also of the prejudice that prevents him from freely accepting either.

A. THE MAJOR CHARACTERS

1. Löb Levy (*Frau Sorge*, 1887)
2. Löb Levy (*Geschichte der stillen Mühle*, 1888)
3. Adah Barczinowski (*Sodoms Ende*, 1891)
4. Jacques Barczinowski (*Sodoms Ende*)
5. Dr. Weisse (*Sodoms Ende*)
6. Siegfried Meyer (*Sodoms Ende*)
7. Jakobi (*Es War*, 1894)
8. Johannes (*Johannes*, 1898)
9. Rabbi Markuse (*Sturmgeselle Sokrates*, 1903)
10. Siegfried Markuse (*Sturmgeselle Sokrates*)
11. Herr Katz (*Das hohe Lied*, 1908)
12. Rachilde Goldfeder (*Das höhere Leben*, 1915)
13. Jeiteles (*Die gutgeschnittene Ecke*, 1915)
14. Philipp Stern (*Heilige Zeit*, 1921)

15. Rosa Stern (*Heilige Zeit*)
16. Felix Stern (*Heilige Zeit*)
17. Ruth Stern (*Heilige Zeit*)
18. Professor Auerbach (*Der tolle Professor*, 192[illegible])
19. Max Friedenthal (*Die Frau des Steffen Tromholt*, 1927)
20. Herr Samuel (*Purzelchen*, 1928)

Frau Sorge (1887)

The most negative Jewish character in Sudermann's works appears in this semi-autobiographical novel of rural hardship. The central figure, Paul Meyhöfer, grows up as the son of an impoverished farmer. His life soon becomes dedicated to saving the debt-ridden property, a struggle that robs him of his talents and self-respect. One of the causes of the family's poverty is the usurer Löb Levy, who, through cunning and dishonesty, almost reduces the Meyhöfers to complete destitution.[2] The description of this character is that of the traditional Jewish moneylender - clever, ruthless and untrustworthy - and the negative image is reinforced by his unsavoury appearance. The author emphasizes the danger represented by Levy through his description of Frau Elisabeth's instinctive fear of her husband's business dealings with him. For her, the Jew is the "Halsabschneider" and her tears when he arrives at the farm are prophetic. Levy himself appears as "der gefällige Freund aller verschuldeten Gutsbesitzer",[3] a Jew in "seinem schmierigen Kaftan" (43). Levy's dishonesty is made plain in his cheating of Meyhöfer, but, more significantly, the author also hints at his actual delight in having outwitted the slow-thinking farmer, which implies in its turn a racial impulse towards dishonesty:

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[2] There is a parallel here to other Jewish moneylenders of contemporary novels, such as the broker who ruins the main character in von Polenz's *Der Büttnerbauer*.

> Ja, es liess sich nicht mehr verleugnen. Meyhöfer hatte fast die ganze Ernte, das gedroschene Korn wie das noch auszudreschende, dem Juden für die alte, abgebrauchte Dampfmaschine verkauft. Triumphierend fuhr dieser mit den schönen, prallen Säcken von dannen. (470)

When Meyhöfer discovers the plot, his reaction is to thrash Levy:

> Als gegen Weihnachten Löb Levy auf dem Hof erschien, um den Rest des Getreides abzuholen, prügelte ihn Meyhöfer mit seinem eigenen Peitschenstiele durch. Der Jude schrie Gewalt und fuhr schleunigst wieder von dannen. (49)

The stereotype of Shylock beating his breast and crying aloud is instantly apparent, as is the razor-sharp intelligence that eventually defeats Meyhöfer.

Löb Levy also appears in the novella *Geschichte der stillen Mühle*, again as a hated and feared money-lender with whom Johannes Felshammer becomes involved. Because of his drunken spree, his brother Martin is compelled to receive his debtors, however shady. Levy is one of these men who presents him with "gelbe, fettige Papierchen" which bear his brother's signature. The image of uncleanliness, of cunning, of a character who preys upon human sorrow and misfortune is the most stereotyped in Sudermann's works. Levy's ancestry is constantly stressed, and becomes identified with his negative traits. Unflattering terms of reference are used, such as "Kornwucherer". Even the adjectives "gelb" and "fettig" create the impression of a character whose appearance is as unsavoury as his personality. In *Frau Sorge*, the use of the word "Kaftan" also underlines the connotation that Levy's garments are as alien to Germany as his race. All in all, Levy is a Jewish literary type which is entirely familiar, a xenophobic vision in his stereotyped contemptibility.

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[3] Hermann Sudermann, *Frau Sorge*, in *Romane und Novellen*, I (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1930), 43.

Sodoms Ende (1891)

The first slight signs of change in characterization appear in this work. Sudermann creates here a satire attacking the Berlin upper-class world where money and egoism rule. Adah Barczinowski, as the chief representative of this hollow, glittering society, deserves a closer analysis. She is wholly a product of this trivial world. She is depicted as a fading beauty who displays:

> Degagierte Bewegungen, Reizbarkeit und das Bemühen nach überlegener Eleganz [...] - Redeweise nervös, leichtflüssig, pointenreich, voll hohlen Esprits. - Das ganze Benehmen eine gewollte, hie und da missratene Kopie der Salondamen aus Pariser Konversationsstücken.[1]

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[1] Hermann Sudermann, *Sodoms Ende*, in *Dramatische Werke*, IV (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1923), 139.

Emphasis is laid by the author on Adah's unhappiness and neuroticism. Dr. Weisse describes her as:

> Ganz Nerven und ganz Eitelkeit ... Mit den Allüren der Leidenschaft, aber kalt, kalt wie 'ne Hundeschnauze ... (134)

More than anything, Sudermann stresses the lack of human warmth in and around Adah. He uses terms like "kalt" and "frostig" to describe her character, e.g. after the dance when she shakes her locks "in frostigem Bacchantentum" (149). The contrast here reflects the two sides of Adah's personality: her promiscuity which, however, is offset by her basic frigidity that renders hopeless her search for happiness. Vampire-like, she feeds on Willy until he rebels, seeing in him a vivid youth as yet uncontaminated by spiritual emptiness. As she drifts aimlessly through life, the affair with him provides her with an illusion of happiness.

All these traits combine to create a superficially unfavourable portrait of Adah. Only recent criticism has revealed more understanding of her character. For earlier critics like Hedi Guntrum, Adah is the type best described as a "geistige Dirne":

> Aus der Vermischung hysterischer Neigungen mit geistigen und körperlichen Prostitutionsgelüsten, mit schöngeistigem Aesthetentum und geheucheltem Kunstinteresse geht ein Typ wie Adah Barczinowsi [...] hervor.[5]

As late as 1957, Paul Fechter described her succinctly as a

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[5] Hedi Guntrum, *Die Emanzipierte in der Dichtung des Naturalismus*, Diss. Giessen 1928 (Giessen: Buchdruckerei Nitschkowski), p. 22.

"Salonschlange".[6]

Recent criticism, however, has begun to recognize the psychological implications of the crucial scene in the third act which lends some insight into Adah's character.[7] In the confrontation between Frau Janikow and Adah, we see another side of her, the woman whose dignity and self-respect are outraged by her husband's constant and blatant infidelity. In this nouveau riche world, adultery is common and even acceptable, provided no scandal ensues. Adah clearly chooses to conform out of a need for revenge and bitterness:

> Und nun steh' ich da - leer und allein ... Und mich friert! ... Da kommt einer wie Ihr Sohn ... jung und schön und heiss ... In ihm verkörpert sich alles, was man verloren hat - Jugend und Torheit und Leidenschaft ... da saugt man sich fest mit allen Organen! ... Und dass man jenen betrügt, was ist denn dabei? ... Ist nicht jeder Atemzug, den er tut, ein Betrug? ... Und hat man nicht oft genug nachts wachend dagelegen und vor Sehnsucht und Wut in das Bettuch hineingebissen? (198)

For Guntrum, these lines only prove Adah's need to satisfy her vanity and her sexual frustration. This interpretation is wholly accurate but fails to uncover the psychological causes for Adah's destructive sexuality.[8] The trivial society in which she lives has reduced her existence to a meaningless search for pleasure and isolated her from any genuine relationship. Weisse sees her machinations as rooted in her psychological instability. He points out correctly that she herself does not know what she wants. The reason for this lies in her starved emotions; Adah can sense that she needs self-respect, security and love, but in her selfishness and vanity she sees them only in a lasting domination over Willy. Her needs are justified; her methods are not. In Willy she sees her hope of acquiring this fulfilment; it is a primal need which is revealed in her tormented words to Frau Janikow:

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[6] Paul Fechter, *Das europäische Drama. Geist und Kultur im Spiegel des Theaters. Vom Naturalismus bis Expressionismus*, II (Mannheim: Bibliographisches Institut A.G., 1957), 88.

[7] Cf., John Fitzell, "Hermann Sudermann: Feuer- und Wassermotivik im dramatischen Werk," in *Hermann Sudermann. Werk und Wirkung*, p. 156.

[8] Hedi Guntrum, *Die Emanzipierte in der Dichtung des Naturalismus*, p. 23.

> Ja - da sitzen Sie nun behäbig mitten in Ihrer Moral und starren mich an wie eine Verworfene! Und ich will doch nichts wie - glücklich sein - glücklich sein - und wenn nicht anders, mit Gewalt - mit Gewalt! - mit Gewalt! (198)

This hysterical appeal for happiness creates a more effective condemnation of a corrupt and corrupting society than the entire play manages to achieve. Adah specifically blames her environment for her unhappiness when she contrasts it to Frau Janikow's petty bourgeois existence:

> Ja, Sie haben's leicht ... Was wissen Sie von einem Wesen wie ich? ... Ist Ihr Leben nicht immer eins geblieben mit dem, was das Natürliche von uns verlangt? Nennen Sie's Glück - oder Liebe - oder wie Sie wollen! Da sehn Sie mich an! Warum soll ich ausgeschlossen sein von dem sogenannten Glück? ... Gerade ich? ... (198)

The possibility exists, of course, that Adah is using these terms merely to justify her unscrupulous behaviour; on the other hand, we see that the author formulates the entire play as an attack upon this particular society and that Adah's actions are symptomatic of the decadence he portrays. Her every act may be traced back to the neuroticism and vice of her environment. She is in her own way a victim, just as vulnerable as Kitty or Kläre Fröhlich.

An illuminating moment in this scene is Adah's need to kiss Frau Janikow's hand and call her "Mutter". Willy's mother represents for her warmth, a stable identity and stable values, however old-fashioned. The constant repetition of the word "Mutter" acts as a talisman, symbolic of the maternal tenderness and the security associated with childhood:

> Ich dank' Ihnen, Mutter, Mutter! Sehen Sie, nun darf ich Sie *doch* Mutter nennen! (199)

The entire conversation is symptomatic of Adah's character. She blackmails the horrified Frau Janikow into accepting the engagement, but at the same time, she wants forgiveness for her actions. Thus she forces a bizarre travesty of the mother-child relationship on the old lady, who regards her with actual revulsion. Given the evidence of this scene, we see that Adah in her own way is as tragic a figure as the weak-willed Willy or Käthchen Fröhlich. She is trapped in a world in which the self-respect or the happiness she needs cannot exist.

Sodoms Ende is the portrait of a wealthy, morally destitute world careering towards its own destruction. Sudermann's description of this "teils schon recht wurmstichigen Grossbürgertums"[1] strips away its glossy veneer to reveal the parasitical lives beneath the ostentatious life-style, the joy in smutty innuendo, the tasteless jokes, the merciless gossip, the superficial wit that passes for intelligence. For Litzmann, such a portrayal reveals the born satirist:

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[1] Max Halbe, *Jahrhundertwende* (München: Langen Müller, 1976), p. 62.

> Nicht einer von der zahmen Sorte, die nur kitzeln und krauen, sondern einer vom Schlage Juvenals, der mit grimmiger Genugthuung seine Stachelpeitsche schwingt, dass aus dem weichen wollüstigen Fleisch das Blut emporspritzt und die Menschen, die nicht mehr erröten können, wenigstens ihr Gesicht verhüllen, damit man nicht sieht, wie im Angstschweiss ihre Schminke in Tropfen zerfliesst.[10]

The milieu under attack is without doubt primarily Jewish, one that Landsberg refers to as a "sichtbar jüdisch gefärbte Gesellschaft."[11] It is an interesting fact, however, that no emphasis is laid upon this point. There are one or two references to the race of the people described and these occur only in the first act. No further mention appears of their ancestry. Richard Daunicht points out that Sudermann actually altered an earlier draft to reduce this impression, although traces of Yiddish remain:

> Die Bühnenanweisung zum ersten Auftritt Jacques Barczinowskis beginnt: *"Typus eines Börsenjobbers, doch ohne jüdische Maske"*. Der entscheidende Passus lautete in einem früheren handschriftlichen Entwurf: *"Doch ohne prononciert jüdische Maske"*, das Wort "prononciert" hat Sudermann dann gestrichen.[12]

Daunicht feels that "ein Stück jüdisch-deutscher Assimilationsprozess" was intended by Sudermann in this play.[13] Siegfried Meyer, for example, ironically comments on his Teutonic name:

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[10] Berthold Litzmann, *Das deutsche Drama in den litterarischen Bewegungen der Gegenwart* (Hamburg und Leipzig: Verlag von Leopold Voss, 1897), p. 194.

[11] Landsberg, *Hermann Sudermann*, p. 49.

[12] Richard Daunicht, "*Sodoms Ende* - Sudermanns Ende?" in *Hermann Sudermann. Werk und Wirkung*, p. 95.

> Ja, das kam so: Als meine Eltern mich - hm - taufen liessen, war Siegfried so das Germanischste, wo zu haben war. Leider kamen auch andere Leute auf die Idee. (141)

This explanation also indirectly refers to the growing need for assimilation by Jews under the Hohenzollerns.

Apart from this, the Judaism of the characters in *Sodoms Ende* is not stressed. They err not as Jews, but as frivolous members of an endlessly frivolous society. There is no trace of antisemitism on the part of the non-Jews who appear. That such a predominantly Jewish nouveau riche society did exist at this time, mainly around the *Tiergartenviertel*, is denied by few.[14] *Sodoms Ende* bears witness to this fact, but does not draw any conclusions from it. Ironically, *Sodoms Ende* is the one work by Sudermann in which Jews are not portrayed as indefinably different from the Germans around them. These Jews appear wholly assimilated and accepted by their fellow Germans. Their specific Jewishness corresponds only to the social reality that Sudermann found in this Berlin elite; it bears, however, no other relevance apart from the recognition of their presence. It plays also no role in the plot or the character development; no issues affecting the Jewish community are touched upon.

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[13] Richard Daunicht, p. 96.

[14] Cf., Carl Bleibtreu, *Die Verrohung der Literatur. Ein Beitrag zur Haupt- und Sudermännerei* (Berlin: Verlagsbuchhandlung Schall & Rentel, 1903), pp. 29ff.

Adah Barczinowski, Siegfried Meyer, Kitty Tattenberg, all appear first and foremost as individuals, not as Jews. They conform to the type of Jew in Sudermann's works only in intelligence and comparative prosperity. In all other matters, they are Jewish only in name, being entirely German in beliefs and attitudes, and as such, they represent a deviation from the type.

On the other hand, Sudermann's portrayal of his Jewish characters takes a more positive, less clichéd approach in his 1894 novel *Es War*.

Es War (1894)

The character Jakobi, or, as the Junkers refer to him, "der Jude", is also a rural moneylender, but the gulf between him and Löb Levy is infinite. Jakobi is radically different from Levy, being wholly positive. Sudermann portrays him as a clever broker who stands in favour even with the Junkers in his district due to his generosity and his refusal to exploit the misfortunes of his clients:

> Er gab und lieh, so weit eines jeden Kreditfähigkeit reichte, und manches stolze Rittergut gehörte von Rechts wegen in seine Tasche. Aber seine Macht missbrauchte er nie, und nicht ein einziger Fall war bekannt, wo er den Totengräber gespielt hätte. "Schenken is 's beste Geschäft," pflegte er zu sagen, und er behielt Recht mit dieser Parole, denn er genoss ein unbegrenztes Vertrauen und wurde reicher von Jahr zu Jahr.[15]

Significantly, the Junkers tolerate and like Jakobi, but in the final analysis, he remains "der Jude", the alien in their midst. Jakobi fits the positive type represented by Markuse (*Sturmgeselle Sokrates*), the intelligent Jew, kindly, tactful and tolerant of human follies. [illegible] understands perfectly the nature of the domineering, stubborn Junkers, and in the same way that Markuse can smooth over a fracas by saying exactly the right thing, Jakobi manages to advise his headstrong clients with a combination of tact and insight. His way of addressing them (by constantly repeating their titles) is calculated to set them at their ease by subtly stressing their social, if not economic, advantage over him. Like Markuse, he is a type that represents the best of both worlds. Both conform to the pattern of older Jews in Sudermann's later works who accept their precious heritage while seeking to maintain their dignity in a German society. They do not demand or expect instant tolerance and are content with their role as semi-aliens.

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[15] Hermann Sudermann, *Es War*, p. 149.

From this point onwards, the Jews in Sudermann's works generally appear in a positive and even openly sympathetic light. The negative figures that occasionally resurface are linked to Levy only in the matter of business ethics; in all other traits they appear parasitical rather than actually venomous.

Sturmgeselle Sokrates (1903)

Perhaps the best-known example of the positive Jewish type in Sudermann's works is that of the rabbi, Dr. Markuse, in the play *Sturmgeselle Sokrates*. Assimilation, rejection, tolerance, bitter resentment and condescension, all facets of the Jewish experience are touched upon here, but the controversy aroused by the political statement of this "arg verkannten Stück"[16] has generally overshadowed the importance of the characters of Markuse and his son in the context of Sudermann's own view of the hardships of Jews in Germany. The criticism tends to pass over the author's treatment of this question; it is usually directed against his portrayal of the follies of these would-be revolutionaries of 1848.

Rabbi Markuse belongs to the generation of idealists who fought for a democratic Germany in which distinctions of caste and creed would no longer exist. The most positive figure of the play, he creates the impression of tact, wisdom and tolerance. For Henri Schoen, he is "le plus sage des conjurés, l'homme de la conciliation"[17] but for M.J. Landa, he is simply a "compromising rabbi".[18] Intelligence is Markuse's most obvious trait; the other "Sturmgesellen" are by comparison either pedants or undisciplined romantics.

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[16] Heinrich Spiero, *Deutsche Geister. Studien u. Essays zur Literatur der Gegenwart* (Leipzig: Xenien-Verlag, 1910), p. 67.

[17] Henri Schoen, *Hermann Sudermann. Poète dramatique et Romancier* (Paris: Librairie H. Didier, 1904), p. 288.

[18] M.J. Landa, *The Jew in Drama* (London: P.S. King & Son, 1926), p. 264.

Thus while the Gentile Hartmeyer's reactions are portrayed as sentimental or ridiculous, the rabbi always dominates the situation without ruffling personal feelings or losing his dignity.

Two interesting facts may be noticed here. Firstly, except in *Sodoms Ende*, Sudermann does not portray the German Jew as just any other German; their ancestry tends to be stressed, by themselves or by those around them. Secondly, we may distinguish a clear difference in the attitudes of the older and the younger generations of German Jews to their difficult existence as a resented minority. In the first instance, Rabbi Marcuse's Jewishness is all-important. It is constantly referred to by friend and foe, with affection, dislike or condescending tolerance. With such emphasis placed upon this factor, it is necessary to evaluate Markuse's own relationship to his race, his religion and his nationality.

Rabbi Markuse is as much a Jew as he is German; he is true to his racial heritage but can harmonize it with his German birth. His humanity is reminiscent of Nathan der Weise. For Stümcke the rabbi represents "den uralt indischen und goethischen Standpunkt, dass alle menschlichen Gebrechen reine Menschlichkeit sühnt."[19] Markuse's tolerance is rooted in his understanding of human limitations; he realises and accepts that the prejudice against his people cannot be wiped out overnight. He accepts friendship with grace and regards with good-humoured patience the slights offered by others. Thus his views on his ambiguous position as a Jew in Germany lack the single-minded aggressiveness displayed by his son. He is more capable of compromise, a character trait emphasized more than once. He has, for example, no compunction about the necessity of holding a service to celebrate the victory at Sedan. In Kurt Sabatzky's words, he recognizes:

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[19] Heinrich Stümcke, *Die vierte Wand. Theatralische Eindrücke und Studien* (Leipzig: G. Weigand, 1904), p. 122.

> ... die Forderungen seiner Zeit, mit denen sich jeder Staatsbürger abzufinden hat, allen andern gegenüber.[20]

He recognizes better than anyone the special vulnerability of his race to criticism:

> Sollen wir uns nachsagen lassen, dass wir keine Patrioten sind? *Den* Luxus können *wir* uns nicht erlauben, wir Hebräer.[21]

Intelligence, compassion and sensitivity appear to be the main traits of Sudermann's positive Jewish type. These characteristics are similar to those displayed by Schnitzler's famous Professor Bernhardi, who suffers with dignity the prejudice that wrecks his career.[22] A similarly sympathetic Jewish type is that of Jöslein, in Hauptmann's *Florian Geyer* (1896), who manages to refute the antisemitic criticism of his race. There exist trivialities that weaken Markuse's characterization and damage the overall integrity of the play, such as the the notorious scene with the ham rolls (in which the rabbi is depicted as secretly devouring this forbidden food), which was attacked as tasteless by critics; Landsberg, for example, described it as "schlechthin unentschuldbar".[23] It is probable, however, that this particular incident is designed to demonstrate Markuse's ability to reject dogma and to compromise with sly humour between both worlds.

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[20] Kurt Sabatzky, *Der Jude in der dramatischen Gestaltung* (Königsberg i. Pr.: Buchverlag der Königsberger Hartungschen Zeitung, 1930), p. 26.

[21] Hermann Sudermann, *Sturmgeselle Sokrates*, p. 201.

[22] Kurt Busse also brings out the similarity between *Professor Bernhardi* and *Sturmgeselle Sokrates*, but only in the political context. Cf. Kurt Busse, *Hermann Sudermann. Sein Werk und sein Wesen*, p. 141.

Siegfried Markuse, on the other hand, is depicted as a young Jew raised in comparative equality to the Germans. Unlike his father, he therefore takes his nationality for granted and reacts with anguish when he is confronted with antisemitism for the first time. Sudermann's portrayal of this character is clearly a sympathetic study of the painful isolation of the younger generation within a beloved country. Siegfried, as his name suggests, is as German, if not more so, than the Germans. His race and religion are far less important to him than his Schillerian ideals. This attitude is accurately described by Solomon Liptzin when he portrays the post-Napoleonic Jews as fleeing from Judaism:

> They hurled themselves madly, hysterically, into the arms of an overidealized German culture. They wanted to be Germans, nothing but Germans.[24]

Siegfried considers himself wholly German, unlike his father, who accepts his separate cultural identity, not desiring to lose it in the pursuit of assimilation.

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[23] Hans Landsberg, *Hermann Sudermann*, p. 78.

[24] Solomon Liptzin, *Germany's Stepchildren* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1944), p. 26.

Markuse's Judaism and his love for Germany are never in conflict; but for Siegfried, his Jewishness is incidental, a fact forgotten until the first moment of rejection. A strikingly similar viewpoint is expressed by Walther Rathenau, who wrote:

> In den Jugendjahren eines jeden deutschen Juden gibt es einen schmerzlichen Augenblick, an den er sich zeitlebens erinnert: wenn ihm zum ersten Male voll bewusst wird, dass er als Bürger zweiter Klasse in die Welt getreten ist, und dass keine Tüchtigkeit und kein Verdienst ihn aus dieser Lage befreien kann.[25]

Siegfried is compelled to recognize that neither his considerable intelligence nor his love for Germany can compensate for the handicap of being born Jewish. The crude rejection by his ex-schoolfriend Reinhold is symptomatic of the prejudice that surrounds him. It is significant that it is Reinhold, the nationalistic student who revels in the glory of the Hohenzollerns and Germany's military prowess, who displays the most dislike for Siegfried. Sudermann thus satirizes the cheap nationalism of the day that expresses itself in chauvinism, as Heinrich Mann later does in his novel *Der Untertan* (1918). Writers like Adler have pointed out this link between the rise of antisemitism in Germany and the founding of the Reich:

> So zeigte sich, dass der überhitzte Nationalismus von der Reichsgründung noch nicht befriedigt, sondern erst recht gefördert worden war und nun mit Ausschliessungssucht sich gegen nicht in allen Einzelheiten konformierenden Gruppen wandte. Es half den Juden nichts, dass sie Deutsche waren, solange

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[25] Walther Rathenau, "Staat und Judentum," in *Zur Kritik der Zeit* (Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1922), p. 223.

sie trotzdem auch Juden blieben.[26]

The result of this treatment is increasing bitterness and resentment. The parallels to the figure of Moritz Freudenstein in Raabe's *Der Hungerpastor* are striking; the little Moses, ill-treated by his fellow Germans, also grows up with a burden of anger and resentment, combined with an insatiable hunger for power which will prove his superiority over such bigots. With every insult, Siegfried's consciousness of being different is reinforced, and his sole aim now is not productive cooperation with his fellow Germans, but the obsessive need to compel them to recognize his superiority. As he says:

> Ihr *wollt* uns zu Feinden haben. Ihr *sollt* uns zu Feinden haben. Wollen sehen, wer Sieger bleibt. (179)

The differing attitude of these two generations of Jews to the problem of assimilation and antisemitism is repeated in other works by Sudermann. The older generation as represented by the rabbi do not display the injured pride and acute sensitivity of their children. With this partly ghetto mentality, they tend to ignore insults or accept them with equanimity. Markuse personifies the idealistic view that Jewish dignity and compassion will eventually overcome prejudice. Resentment will only become self-destructive. As he says to his son:

> Aber gut: ich will mal den Fall setzen, du hättest Recht und die Welt will mal wieder nichts von uns wissen, der Deutsche will nicht, dass wir mit ihm

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[26] H.G. Adler, *Die Juden in Deutschland. Von der Aufklärung bis zum Nationalsozialismus* (München: Kösel-Verlag, 1960), p. 102.

> Deutsche, der Russe, dass wir mit ihm Russen, der Franzose, dass wir mit ihm Franzosen sind. Dann werden wir eben *das* sein, was sie nicht sein *wollen*, und werden so der Menschheit das kostbarste Kleinod aufbewahren, das sie besitzt und das sie achtlos weggeworfen hat: den Menschen. Aber hiefür müssen wir uns auch würdig halten ... (180)

In this scene, which Theodor Kappstein feels is most closely linked to the philosophy of *Nathan der Weise*,[27] Sudermann may have postulated a partial solution to the problem of the Jews in Germany. However, such calm acceptance of prejudice is incomprehensible to the younger generation of Jews like Siegfried, who recognizes the roots of this evil in the growing public anger over the increasing presence of Jews in the social, cultural and economic spheres. A similar theme is touched upon in Schnitzler's *Leutnant Gustl*, in which the hero expresses his not altogether pleasant surprise at meeting so many Jews in upper social circles. In Siegfried's eerily prophetic words to his father:

> Du stehst noch mit einem Fuss im alten Ghetto und glaubst dich zu wunder welcher Dankbarkeit verpflichtet, weil man dich 'rausliess. Ich wittere bereits die Luft eines neuen, in das sie uns sperren wollen, weil sie uns fürchten, weil wir im freien Spiel der Kräfte ihnen zu gross wurden. Das wird keine Ketten haben quer über die Strasse und keinen Wachtsoldaten, der zum Nachhausekommen bläst, das wird nichts weiter sein als hier und da ein kühles Lächeln, ein sehr höflicher Absagebrief und ein unerwiderter Besuch und wird doch tausendmal schmerzlicher auf die Gemüter drücken als die stinkende Gasse von dazumal. (180)

An often quoted criticism of *Sturmgeselle Sokrates*, published by the *Vossische Zeitung* in 1903, attacks the character of Siegfried Markuse with the argument that a person displaying such arrogance hardly deserves to be accepted into any student corps:

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[27] Theodor Kappstein, *Sudermann und seine besten 17 Bühnenwerke*, p. 80.

> Aber dass ein vorlauter frecher und feiger Bursche, wie ihn Sudermann schildert, in keine Verbindung aufgenommen zu werden verdiente, ob Burschenschaft, ob Korps, ob er Markuse oder Müller hiess, wird jedermann nur berechtigt finden. Der Antisemitismus spielt dabei keine Rolle, und von der Gesinnung der Studentenschaft von 1877 weiss Sudermann so wenig wie von den Gesinnungen und Taten der Achtundvierziger.[28]

A closer analysis of the text reveals though that Siegfried's arrogance appears only after his rejection by the corps and by his friend; it seems to be intended as verbal armour, his sole effective defence against the hostility of inarticulate yokels like Reinhold. In this inimical environment, his air of superiority is actually a mask for his sense of loss and alienation.

Sturmgeselle Sokrates ends with the dissolution of the group. These "echte Zwielichtsgestalten"[29] must now adjust to life in a Bismarckian Germany. A final and revealing incident is Boretius' parting antisemitic snub directed against Markuse, displaying as it does the extent of unconscious prejudice even within those who regard themselves as idealists, a latent feeling that surfaces at times of crisis when the disciplines of logic and loyalty are abandoned.

In few other types do Sudermann's own sympathies appear so clearly. In the conflict between Jews and Germans we see that the antisemites are uniformly depicted as foolish or vindictive, while the Jewish figures themselves are portrayed as intelligent, sensitive and talented. In his retort to the criticism of *Sturmgeselle Sokrates*, Sudermann wrote:

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[28] Dr. J. Levy, "Die Sturmgesellen," in *Die Vossische Zeitung*, 6.10.1903.
[29] Heinrich Spiero, "Hermann Sudermann," in *Deutsches Biographisches Jahrbuch*, 10 (1928), 281.

> "Die beiden aber, die im Mittelpunkte der Handlung stehen, den Zahnarzt und den Rabbiner, habe ich mit voller Liebe - *menschlicher* Liebe, die künstlerische versteht sich von selbst - erdacht und ausgestaltet. Ihre Tugenden erscheinen mir verehrungswürdig, vor ihre Schwächen stelle ich mich zur Verteidigung bereit, viele ihrer Worte unterschreibe ich als meine eigene Ueberzeugung, und überall da, wo ich sie irren und fehlen lasse, sympathisiere ich mehr mit ihnen, als mit anderen Gestalten, die auf der ganzen Linie Recht behalten.[30]

This positive, almost idealistic portrayal of the Jewish type is not visible at the beginning of Sudermann's career and represents a development away from his earliest works *Frau Sorge* and *Geschichte der stillen Mühle*.

Heilige Zeit (1921)

This play with expressionistic overtones presents perhaps Sudermann's most forthright analysis of the complex problem of being Jewish in Germany before World War I. *Heilige Zeit* portrays the varying reactions of the German people to the proclamation of war. The Jewish characters here are no exception. The Stern family becomes the author's model for the differing experiences and attitudes of German Jews during this period.

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[30] Hermann Sudermann, *Die Sturmgesellen. Ein Wort zur Abwehr.* (Berlin: F. Fontane & Co., 1903), p. 11.

Written from the post-war perspective, *Heilige Zeit* falls into two main parts, the first dealing with the events leading up to the war and the second with the weeks of fighting that follow. The Stern family appears against this backdrop and Sudermann uses them to depict the German Jew - influential, yet disliked; yearning to belong, yet constantly slighted; visible on every level of society, yet unwanted. Four Jewish figures appear for whom the problematic situation is much the same as in *Sturmgeselle Sokrates*. Whereas the older generation regard their difficult position more or less with equanimity, their children, born and bred in Germany, react with outrage and anguish to the prejudice they must face. Philipp Stern, the wealthy financier, is ruthless, outspoken and completely self-assured. He has carved his own niche in German business and displays no interest in the finer nuances of social intercourse. He is secure in his identity as German and as Jew. Like Rabbi Markuse (*Sturmgeselle Sokrates*) or Jakoby (*Es War*) he does not show any passionate longing to be accepted for his own sake.

Rosa Stern, on the other hand, appears to be a type related to Rachilde Goldfeder (*Das höhere Leben*) but without the latter's shrewdness. She is depicted as a foolish, insensitive woman, a born snob who regards the antisemitic insults with which she is confronted only as another obstacle to her entry into the higher classes. Her snobbishness leads her to expose herself to silent contempt, as in her meeting with Frau Eggebrecht, who snubs her with exquisite cruelty. These attacks do not seriously affect Rosa because she lacks the sensitivity to recognize the deeper implications of such moments.

Sudermann's characterisation is at its most positive when dealing with the Stern children. He effectively portrays the pain of these young Jews at every slight, the strain of being constantly made to feel alien in a beloved land. The very real anguish implicit in such a situation has also been captured in the works of Jewish authors such as Ernst Toller's *Eine Jugend in Deutschland*. It is a depressing picture that Sudermann paints of the Jews in Germany. The Stern family meet with a wide range of reactions from naive or genial curiosity to condescending tolerance and glacial hostility. A sketch of genteel antisemitism at its worst is seen in the personality of Frau Eggebrecht, who refers to the Sterns as the "nichtarischen Mitbürger", who complains that her son's school is not "judenrein", and forbids him to bring his Jewish classmate home. Harry Eggebrecht's attitude reveals a different type of prejudice. While personally bearing no animosity towards Felix Stern, he is totally indifferent to the antisemitism of society and has no desire to go against custom. His mother's bigotry arouses no reaction at all. He has no interest in Felix and no desire to mix with him outside the school. This passive acceptance of prejudice is wholly cynical and is perhaps less understandable than Frau

Eggebrecht's fundamental foolishness. Even the reaction of basically good-natured people like Eggebrecht reveals the extent to which ideas are based upon stereotypes. Asking his wife to make amends for her coldness towards Rosa Stern, he says:

> Ich bitte dich, mach das rasch wieder gut. Diese jüdischen Herrschaften sind alle miteinander verfilzt, und man weiss nie, wie man sie mal brauchen kann - mindestens für die Wohltätigkeit ...[31]

In every line, the author's sympathy for his Jewish figures is obvious, as is his satirical view of the ignorance that leads to antisemitism. An interesting satirical touch is the manner in which Frau Eggebrecht becomes as obseqious as Rosa Stern when she is confronted by the aristocratic Melitta. Gentile reactions are analysed, as in Melitta's nervousness and curiosity on meeting a Jew for the first time, or in the attitude of her vacuous officer cousin who has no interest in the matter but feels compelled to point out that the monarch himself has followed liberal policies. Even in these fundamentally well-meaning people, one glimpses an instinctive tendency to regard the German Jew as an alien within the fold.

Felix Stern himself corresponds to the type of positive Jew in Sudermann's works, being intelligent, articulate and sensitive.[32]

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[31] Hermann Sudermann, *Heilige Zeit*, in *Dramatische Werke*, VI (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1923), 52.

[32] Mainland in his article on Sudermann has pointed out the similarities between the characters of Felix and Wilhelm Eynhardt in Max Nordau's novel *Die Krankheit des*

Like Siegfried Markuse (*Sturmgeselle Sokrates*), he strives to come to terms with his inimical countrymen. The result is similar: a lasting embitterment stemming from years of pain and resentment. His resignation is his only defence. When he is asked whether he does not feel the insults to his family, his answer is unequivocal and unemotional:

> Ich habe zu lange am Schandpfahl gestanden [...], als dass dergleichen mich noch berühren könnte. (48)

In the dormitory scene that begins the play, his is the voice of the Old Testament prophesying the coming of war:[33]

> Euer Friede ist ein Speergeschüttel und ein Klirren von Schilden. Euer Friede ist ein Lauern im Dornstrauch und ein Giftpfeil auf die Senne gelegt. Euer Friede ist ein *ver sacrum* von Millionen, die alle dastehen wie Schlachtvieh vorm Messer. Das ist euer Friede. (19)

This repetition has distinct overtones of Jewish prophecy and is an ominous warning of the coming cataclysm. For Felix, who seeks some reason for the new exaltation following the declaration of war, the answer is found in the reaction of the communist workers, who respond first with antagonism, and then with passionate abandon to Sewitz's appeal for unity. Old boundaries and prejudices are swept away, and Felix must also dedicate himself, leaving behind his anger and resentment. He is no longer isolated, but part of the nation:

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[32] (cont'd)*Jahrhunderts* (William F. Mainland, "Hermann Sudermann," in *German Men of Letters*, II [London: Oswald Wolff, 1963], 38).

[33] It is also significant that even among these young men, stress is frequently laid upon Felix's ancestry; they appear to regard his remarkable intelligence as a specifically Jewish gift.

> Denn man steht doch nicht abseits am Wege - man drängt mit. Und wenn so ein Bauernknecht einen anlacht und sagt "Jud", dann klingt das "u" wie in "Bruder". (108)

While the author later portrays the euphoria as short-lived, the German Jews nevertheless see the war at this point in time as their way out of their invisible ghetto, the path back into the mainstream of German society.

Ruth's case is similar. In pre-war Germany, she sees humiliation everywhere, and her own intelligence and sensitivity only serve to worsen her isolation. She senses the latent antagonism between Gentile and Jew that has remained unchanged for centuries. Jakob Wassermann expresses a similar bitterness in his autobiography *Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude* when he says:

> Es ist vergeblich, das Volk der Dichter und Denker im Namen seiner Dichter und Denker zu beschwören. Jedes Vorurteil, das man abgetan glaubt, bringt, wie Aas die Würmer, tausende neue zutage [...]
> Es ist vergeblich, die Verborgenheit zu suchen. Sie sagen: der Feigling, er verkriecht sich, sein schlechtes Gewissen treibt ihn dazu.
> Es ist vergeblich, unter sie zu gehen und ihnen die Hand zu bieten. Sie sagen: was nimmt er sich heraus mit seiner jüdischen Aufdringlichkeit?
> Es ist vergeblich, ihnen Treue zu halten, sei es als Mitkämpfer, sei es als Mitbürger. Sie sagen: er ist der Proteus, er kann eben alles.
> Es ist vergeblich, ihnen zu helfen, Sklavenketten von den Gliedern zu streifen. Sie sagen: er wird schon seinen Profit dabei gemacht haben.
> Es ist vergeblich, das Gift zu entgiften. Sie brauen frisches.
> Es ist vergeblich, für sie zu leben und für sie zu sterben. Sie sagen: er ist ein Jude [...][34]

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[34] Jakob Wassermann, *Mein Weg als Deutscher und Jude* (Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1921) pp. 122-23.

In Ruth's words, therefore, we see all the frustrated love of the German Jews for their country, a love that they have come to identify with pain. As she says to the uncomprehending Melitta:

> ... Ja, wenn ich nun *wirklich* als Hilfsschwester eintrete, dann heisst es: "Die kleine Jüdin muss natürlich die Mode mitmachen"... Und je mehr ich mich anstrenge: "Natürlich, die kleine Jüdin muss sich wichtig tun" ... Und ich bin jetzt schon so hautlos. (83)

One is reminded by these words of the figure of Friedrich in Ernst Toller's *Die Wandlung*, who displays the same yearning to serve Germany only to be told by his comrades at the front in matter-of-fact terms that he is a "Vaterlandsloser".

Heilige Zeit remains today a striking analysis of the phenomenon of war hysteria with its effects judged on every level of the population. Against the backdrop of this emotional upheaval, Sudermann projects the varying reactions of his Jewish characters according to their generation, a method which, according to Busse, allows a multiple-level characterization of the German people.[35] Philipp Stern's reaction is typical; he shows little interest in the war except where his son and his business are concerned. His only concession from his coolly analytical viewpoint is his impulsive advice to Sewitz, warning him not to extend too much temptation to the merchants and businessmen in times of war:

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[35] Kurt Busse, *Hermann Sudermann. Sein Werk und sein Wesen*, p. 158.

> ... In drei Monaten werd' ich vielleicht ganz anders denken, denn wie gesagt, ich bin Geschäftsmann, - aber dies ist jetzt *meine* Art von Rausch, und die, glaub' ich, ist nich schlechter, als wenn ich nachts 'rumzieh' und mitschrei'... (111)

For Rosa Stern, the snob, the fighting has implications only with regard to how far she can rise in social prestige through her contribution to the war effort. Even her only son's entry into the war is seen in terms of her social standing. The Sterns are content, each in their own way, with assimilation on an entirely superficial level. Their children, however, see the war as a chance to prove themselves "good" Germans, a chance to be accepted without reservations, to break out of the ghetto into freedom. For them, wielding financial power or acquiring an entry into exclusive salons is unimportant; they desire only to belong, to be considered wholly German.

Sudermann does not create Jewish figures in the other two plays of this trilogy. From 1921, this type appears to lose importance. Subsequent Jewish characters are minor, and references to them are casual, as in the novel *Der tolle Professor* (1926). In this work, considered by some critics to be Sudermann's best effort in the genre, the author has created a living image of the Bismarckian era. The university is a microcosm of this period as seen through the sardonic eyes of Professor Sieburth. That Sudermann has an eye for the fluctuations of antisemitic feeling in Germany (and regards it with distaste) is made clear in the description of the Conservative meeting to which

Pfeifferling takes Sieburth. A personal intervention on the part of the author takes place where he points out that antisemitism was still young then (implying its later success). In yet another scene, Sudermann paints an ironic picture of Junker antisemitism, such as the squire who explains his dislike of visiting Berlin with the words: "Nei, Kinder, da riecht es nach Juden schon auf'm Bahnsteig."[36] Yet again, where Jews are mentioned, the main theme is the problem of antisemitism, which is satirized by Sudermann in no uncertain terms.

SUMMARY

In summing up, we see that there is a development in the characterization of the Jewish figures in Sudermann's works away from the complete stereotype to a sympathetic image of undeserved isolation. Rosenberg sees this as part of a general trend in Western drama at the turn of the century, when the Jew's problematic status, "generally divorced from the cash-nexus, is beginning to engage the playwright's solicitude".[37] The character of Löb Levy, for example, is stereotyped, although presented effectively. The beginning of the change may be detected in the Naturalist play *Sodoms Ende* where, even in this decadent society, we perceive flashes of true humanity, however weak, as in

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[36] Hermann Sudermann, *Der tolle Professor*, p. 509.

[37] Edgar Rosenberg, "The Jew in Western Drama", in *The Jew in English Drama*. Ed. Edward D. Coleman (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1970), p. 48.

Siegfried's sudden impulse to protect Janikow from ridicule. Adah wrecks Willy's life and career by entangling him in a sordid affair and with a decadent society, but Sudermann takes the trouble to reveal the other side of her character - a lonely, frightened woman, desperately searching for love.

The first wholly positive type appears with the figure of Jakobi (*Es War*). The basic image here is repeated often, that of the wise, compassionate and intelligent Jew, content to accept his position as a semi-foreigner in Germany with dignity. The play *Johannes* presents us with a picture of the Jewish people in the historical perspective. Taken en masse, we see that their condition is pitiable, subjugated by the Romans on the one hand, and terrorized by their religious hierarchy on the other. Their suffering is projected against the crumbling cultural and moral values of an entire age.[38] Taken individually, however, they are portrayed with a tacit respect for their innate dignity and their immense capacity for love and self-sacrifice.

The themes of the conflict of generations and the continuing problem of antisemitism are openly discussed for the first time in *Sturmgeselle Sokrates*. The rabbi is a type related to Jakobi, an idealized figure on the lines of Nathan der Weise. Siegfried, on the other hand, has forfeited his heritage in his need to be completely German, and the rejection he encounters is thus doubly agonizing. As Sabatzky says:

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[38] Spiero has also pointed out the similarity here between *Johannes* and *Sodoms Ende* (Heinrich Spiero, *Deutsche Geister*, p. 69).

> Andererseits erkennen wir in ihm den mit seiner Weltanschauung ringenden jungen Juden, dem im Leben Ablehnung und Hass begegnen, und der dadurch verbittert ist und eine Verständigung mit der Umwelt ganz im Gegensatz zu seinem Vater für ausgeschlossen hält.[39]

This pattern of contrasting generations is repeated in the play *Heilige Zeit* with similar results. While the parents either ignore antisemitism or overcome it, the children, who are first and foremost German, react with embitterment to the hostility they encounter. Thus the outbreak of war is seen as an opportunity to prove that they too can serve Germany.

In most of these figures one perceives not merely a favourable characterization, but actual sympathy on the part of the author. Even where less positive characters appear, they are treated with humour, such as Rachilde Goldfeder (*Das höhere Leben*) or Jeiteles (*Die gutgeschnittene Ecke*).[40] On the other hand, while Sudermann satirizes clichés concerning the Jews (Purzelchen's belief that Jews especially like blondes), he does employ them in his characterization. The prime traits seem to be intelligence and acute sensitivity. The more positive figures have exactly the same characteristics, but tempered with wisdom and compassion. Even the brief descriptions leave little doubt about these stereotypes. Felix Stern is sketched as "klein, jüdisch, düster, beinahe fanatisch", while his sister Ruth is "dunkel, ernst, mit feinem Gemmenprofil".

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[39] Kurt Sabatzky, *Der Jude in der dramatischen Gestaltung*, pp. 26-27.

[40] Sabatzky has also pointed out the similarity between Jeiteles and the character Schmock in Gustav Freytag's early comedy *Die Journalisten*.

Thus we see that the Jews in Sudermann's works rarely appear as ordinary Germans, being portrayed as distinctly different. They become increasingly sympathetic throughout his career, and there is a growing emphasis on their problematic position as aliens in an alien land. Negative figures do occur, but they are generally treated as products of a corrupt and heartless society. In this sense, Sudermann's portrayal is rather ambivalent. While he does make use of stereotypes to fashion his Jewish characters, it is also evident that his own sympathy is for this race that must suffer for the accident of its birth.

VI. THE PROLETARIAT

It is a curious and illuminating fact that the proletariat receives a relatively superficial treatment in Sudermann's works, in a time-span ranging from 1887 to 1928 when writers increasingly turned their attention to social themes such as the problems of the urban worker:

> Die Behandlung der Arbeiterfrage in Roman und Drama war eine Angelegenheit, die vorläufig noch in den Händen bürgerlicher Schriftsteller lag, und es war kein Zufall, dass zu einer Zeit des beginnenden Imperialismus die sozialen Probleme in deren Werken eine immer dringlichere Rolle spielten.[1]

Although in this period the German proletariat became the subject for heated literary and political controversy, Hermann Sudermann restricts his workers to two plays and brief scenes in other novels and dramas. His portrayal of the proletariat is essentially sympathetic; however, the sympathy is frequently to be read only between the lines and there is never any confrontation with or detailed analysis of the major social, political and economic problems specific to this class. It appears that in spite of the author's compassion for the workers, his creative interests actually lie elsewhere, i.e., with the upper echelons of society, from which he derives most of his characters. Even where the working class forms the subject of the play, as in *Die Ehre* or *Stein unter Steinen*, we see that the issues confronting the workers are either briefly touched upon or entirely concealed by the main theme.

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[1] Edith Zenker, "Der Arbeiter in der deutschen Literatur", in *Neue Deutsche Literatur*, 5 (1957), 163.

On the whole, a survey of the proletarian figures in Sudermann's works reveals a comparatively insignificant number, spaced far apart. The author clearly demonstrates little interest in the worker as such; wherever he appears, there are almost no details about his labour, his wages, the conditions of work, strikes, worker-employer relations or similar themes touched upon so frequently in other plays of the late nineteenth century. Sudermann seems to ignore social friction in order to concentrate on the worker as a person, with individual problems and conflicts to overcome. A truly political statement comes first with the post-war play *Heilige Zeit*, written in 1921.

In every work that deals with this class, the worker type serves a specific function which is secondary to the main theme. In *Die Ehre*, we see that the damaging effect of poverty on the workers is subordinate to the idea that the concept of honour is a relative one; in *Stein unter Steinen*, there is no reference to social or economic oppression except where it concerns the fate of ex-convicts, and in *Heilige Zeit*, the workers appear primarily to represent the emotional upheaval inflicted by the war on every level of the populace. The patriotic reconciliation of worker with aristocrat in order to form a common front against the enemy is so swift as to obscure almost entirely the preceding debate on the oppression of the proletariat.

All in all, we see that the worker type is not one that interests Sudermann to any great degree. In spite of his own liberal views and the clearly sympathetic references to the hard lot of the workers, he creates, in actual fact, worker types that reveal little concern on his part with socialist beliefs or any systematic need to uncover the depths of suffering. As Richter puts it:

> Sudermann distanziert sich also von der Kritik der Sozialdemokraten, die den Industriellen und ihren Helfershelfern Ausbeutung des städtischen Proletariats vorwarfen. Die Arbeiter, die er darstellt, sind meistens zufriedene Menschen, die keine revolutionären Gedanken äussern.[2]

While his portrayal is undoubtedly effective and realistic, it is also generally one-dimensional, with the exception of Biegler in *Stein unter Steinen*. Genuinely positive characters are conspicuously lacking. The older workers appear foolish or servile, and the younger ones as dour, cowardly or corrupt. The least negative figures are also the most superficial, such as the group of wary, hostile men in *Heilige Zeit*.

A. THE MAJOR CHARACTERS

1. Heinecke (*Die Ehre*, 1889)
2. Frau Heinecke (*Die Ehre*)
3. Auguste (*Die Ehre*)
4. Michalski (*Die Ehre*)

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[2] Gunter Walter Richter, "Die Gesellschaftskritik im Prosawerk Hermann Sudermanns", p. 185.

5. Alma (*Die Ehre*)
6. Eichholz (*Stein unter Steinen*, 1905)
7. Biegler (*Stein unter Steinen*)
8. Lore (*Stein unter Steinen*)
9. Göttlingk (*Stein unter Steinen*)
10. Willy (*Stein unter Steinen*)
11. Lohmann (*Stein unter Steinen*)
12. Sprengel (*Stein unter Steinen*)
13. Struve (*Stein unter Steinen*)
14. Deeskow (*Heilige Zeit*, 1921)
15. Braun (*Heilige Zeit*)
16. Fritsche (*Heilige Zeit*)
17. Der vierte Arbeiter (*Heilige Zeit*)

Die Ehre (1889)

The treatment of workers in this early play appears superficially similar to the author's portrayal of the peasants. Like them, the urban workers here display an extremely simplistic view of life. They are, however, far more negative in their amorality and materialism. While land is all to the Sudermann peasant, the worker is obsessed by the acquisition of money. A parallel development is the increasing lack of awe when faced by those with authority or wealth. On the whole, the treatment of peasants is far more positive in many respects, while few of the workers appear either original or engaging.

Die Ehre, performed for the first time in 1889, made the author overnight into a national celebrity. It was also the cause of much controversy, partly due to the figures of the *Hinterhaus*. While most contemporary critics were united in their rejection of the colourless, conventional characters of the *Vorderhaus*, they saw the portrayal of the Heinecke family as wholly accurate and thoroughly effective. As Otto Brahm puts it:

> Überall, wo Beobachtung und eigene Anschauung den Dichter in diesen Szenen geleitet haben, interessiert er uns lebhaft; er schildert die Gestalt der jugendlich verderbten Alma, diese naive Dirnhaftigkeit, diese dumpfe Beschränktheit des seiner selbst nicht bewussten Lasters mit sehr guten Zügen, und auch die Eltern und Geschwister, den Vater mit dem falschen Gefühl, die Mutter mit ihrer bornierten Sorge um alles Kleinliche, die Tellerschleckerin von Schwester stellt er mit sicherer Bestimmtheit unerschrocken dar.[3]

Their unrelieved crudity is seen through the eyes of the eldest son, Robert, who has acquired, after long years of exile, the social norms of the upper classes. Returning from India, his initial joy soon vanishes, to be replaced by an appalled recognition of his family's materialism and ignorance. His parents appear foolish and vulgar, his sister and brother-in-law greedy opportunists, and his cherished younger sister is a corrupt courtesan.

In *Die Ehre*, Sudermann paints a grittily realistic portrait of the Berlin proletariat, revealing not only the conditions they take for granted, but the factors that form their responses and aspirations in life. For Jung, only the portrayal of the Heineckes had any poetic value, especially that of the figure of Alma.[4]

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[3] Otto Brahm, *Theater. Dramatiker. Schauspieler* (Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1961), p. 354.

Only in this play does the author depict the slave mentality of the workers; in later plays and novels, he creates figures that respect authority but are not overawed by it.[5] *Die Ehre*, unlike any other work, reveals an accurate, unsentimental grasp of milieu and dialect which is in startling contrast to the conventionality of the *Vorderhaus* types. Much of the play's undeniable effect stems from the difference between the wealth and casual arrogance of the Mühlingks and the poverty of the Heinecke family. It is, however, an interesting fact that the author's desire to portray the differing concepts of honour takes precedence and even conflicts with the message of socio-economic oppression. As George Jones puts it:

> At first glance this play seems to be one of social protest, like Schiller's *Love and Intrigue*. In it too we find poor people oppressed by the rich, and in the next to last scene Robert lectures against the wealthy classes who seduce the sisters and daughters of the poor and then compensate them for their disgrace with money earned for them by the poor. Actually, this is not the chief argument, in fact it almost runs counter to the main argument, namely, that honor is a relative thing.[6]

Die Ehre describes proletarians, but does not really concern itself with them except on this superficial level. In a sense, this represents the general failure of Naturalism to grasp adequately the problems of the working class. As Clara Zetkin said about this failure:

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[4] Harry Jung, *Hermann Sudermann*, p. 18.

[5] Even in the idyllic view of worker-employer relations in von Wildenbruch's *Die Haubenlerche* (1890), there are references to a similarly inbred servility.

[6] George Fenwick Jones, *Honor in German Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959), p. 183.

> Der Naturalismus, der die Kunst zu ihrem ewigen Urquell, der Natur, zurückführen wollte, der im Zusammenhang damit auch gedanklich als Gesellschaftskritik Wertvolles geleistet hat, ist zur flachen, leeren Kopie der Wirklichkeit herabgesunken.[7]

In the very first scenes of *Die Ehre*, Sudermann creates an effective portrait of seediness. The Heinecke household is described in detail, with the expensive items of furniture serving to reinforce the image of a family that clings to such objects, not realising how little they match the rest of the room. Thus the twin ideas of ignorance and economic dependence appear at the very beginning.

A typical worker figure is that of Heinecke who, as a type, is related to Eichholz of *Stein unter Steinen*. Other workers in Sudermann's plays and novels reveal similar traits, sometimes exaggerated into active malice, at other times reduced to a stubborn dourness. For all the effectiveness of his character, Heinecke remains a type, a fact that is proved by the author's failing to provide all but the most rudimentary information about him. He is referred to only as the "alte Heinecke", and his limp is the sole attribute available. In *Die Ehre*, we see that Sudermann's portrayal of the worker type is, on the whole, painted in broad strokes and glaring colours, without the finer nuances of characterization that one sees in the category of the Junkers or the Jews. His proletarian figures are at first sight extremely effective in their realism, but a closer scrutiny reveals a curiously one-dimensional quality about them. They lack depth of perception so that their characterization remains on a very superficial level. They remain types for precisely this reason; except for Alma and Jakob Biegler, their personalities are static. The creation of these workers seems to be an intellectual exercise on the part of the author, lacking the personal emotional involvement one detects in his Jews or his peasants.

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[7] Klara Zetkin, "Kunst und Proletariat", in *Das Forum*, 2 (1920), 116.

The character of Heinecke is a typical example. Its very technical skill and gloss serve to conceal the basic absence of depth and detail, even allowing for the limitations of the dramatic form. Sudermann portrays Heinecke's uncouth conduct as the direct result of his poverty and the years of exploitation by those in power. He appears as a crude, ignorant character who lacks any positive quality. His egoism is based on his fundamental stupidity and manifests itself in constant, childish complaints about his family and his employers. The impression of crudity is reinforced in Sudermann's workers by hand movements, such as Heinecke wiping his hand on his trousers when he sees that Robert wishes to kiss it. He is vain and boastful, constantly calling attention to himself and extolling his own character. His extreme greed is matched only by that of his wife, whose first reaction when her son returns home after seven years is astonishment that he has thrown an expensive hat on the ground. Her well-meant advice to Robert to marry the wealthy Lenore and her obsession with her furniture are proof of a child-like, unembarrassed greed that Robert cannot comprehend.

Appropriately enough, Robert's education by the Mühlingks is solely due to the fact that Heinecke becomes drunk at a celebration and accidentally injures himself. This easy tolerance of excessive drinking among the worker types (as with the peasants) is taken for granted. Even Lore (*Stein unter Steinen*) accepts her father's drinking, provided it does not affect his work. Frau Heinecke, in the same way, sees nothing culpable in her husband's conduct on the night of the accident:

> ... Aber das sind nun so an die siebzehn Jahre - da bekam der aus dem Vorderhause, was unser Brotherr war, die Kommerzienratstitelatur. - Und darum gab's 'ne grosse Festivität und Eklipagen und Illemination und dergleichen und Freibier für's janze Fabrikpersonal. - Nu mag mein Mann wohl'n bisken angedudelt gewesen sind - und warum auch nich? - [...] wenn's nischt kost't?[1]

Greed, pomposity and insensitivity are Heinecke's basic character traits. He refers to himself constantly as an "alter, braver Mann", a statement that corresponds not at all with his lack of intelligence or principle, thus rendering himself pathetic and ridiculous. In this bleak portrayal of folly and contemptibility, there is no attempt by the author to create a less unrelievedly negative worker type. All Heinecke's character traits appear in full in the meeting between the servile proletarians and Mühlingk, and the subsequent confrontation with the outraged Robert. In this scene where money is offered with disdain and accepted with gratitude, Sudermann succeeds in creating a genuinely effective portrayal of the brief meeting of two classes, separated under normal circumstances by an infinite gulf. Mühlingk demands that the Heineckes leave his property forthwith; and Heinecke, lacking the intelligence and sensitivity to recognize his distaste, insists on maintaining contact:

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[1] Hermann Sudermann, *Die Ehre*, in *Dramatische Werke*, IV (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1923), 14.

> Sagen Sie das nicht, Herr Kommerzienrat! Wenn Ihnen der Besuch eines alten, braven Mannes nicht lästig fällt, so mach' ich mir manchmal das Verjnügen. Ja, ein alter, braver Mann, das bin ich! (86)

The conclusion is inevitable; Alma is forgiven for having brought the family such bounty, Auguste and Michalski are received back into the fold, and Heinecke lectures the astonished Robert on the ignominity of his dismissal, thus actually taking Mühlingk's part against his son.

Our last view of Heinecke is his gleeful departure to cash the check that is intended to compensate him for his daughter's lost virginity. Armed with money, he and his family are ready to reject Robert. His one thought is that he can now travel by the horse-car as much as he wants and Frau Heinecke's dream is not all that different:

> Mir ist weh vor Freuden! Wenn ick bedenke: Ich brauch' nu nich mehr ohne Jeld uf'n Marcht zu jehen, un wenn mir friert, kann ich nachmittags ohne schlechtes Gewissen noch einmal einheizen - düchtig! - Und abends essen wir kalten Uffschnitt. (87)

In *Die Ehre*, the author leaves unclear to precisely what extent he intended to depict the socio-economic exploitation of the working class. The play is by no means an outright condemnation of the bourgeoisie, since the most positive figure in the play, Graf Trast, is himself a tycoon. The improbable "happy ending" also reveals Robert presumably embarking on a life of financial security, having, as Trast's heir and Lenore's husband, gone over to the upper classes once and for all. *Die Ehre* remains a thoroughly middle-class play that deals sympathetically with the proletariat without ever getting below the surface. In this sense, Sudermann was no different from most other Naturalist writers of the time. As Arno Mulot points out, their sentimentality created a passive and thus negative image of the worker:

> Sie zeigten dadurch an, dass ihre naturalistische Mitleidsliteratur nicht in einem echten Sozialismus oder einem inneren Verständnis für das Los der Schaffenden, sondern in einer schriftstellerischen Mode und in dem kraftlosen Spiel des späten Bürgertums mit philanthropischen Empfindungen wurzelte.[1]

The closest the author comes to an understanding of proletariat resentment is in Alma's forthright rejection of Robert's bourgeois morality:

> Ich weiss janz jut, was ich spreche ... Ja, bin jar nich so dumm! Ich kenn' das menschliche Leben ... Warum *haste* dich so? ... Ist das nicht ein Unsinn, dass man hier sitzen soll wegen jar nischt? - Kein' Sonn', kein Mond scheint 'rin in so 'nen Hof. - Und rings um einen klatschen se und schimpfen! ... Und

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[1] Arno Mulot, *Der Arbeiter in der deutschen Dichtung unserer Zeit* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1938), p. 4.

> keiner versteht was von Bildung ... Und Vater schimpft und Mutter schimpft ... Und man näht sich die Finger blutig! ... Und kriegt fünfzig Pfennig pro Tag ... Das reicht noch nich 'mal zu's Petroleum ... Und man ist jung und hübsch! ... Und möcht' jern lustig sein und hübsch angezogen jehn ... Und möchte jern in andre Sphären kommen ... Denn ich war immer fürs Höhere ... Ja, das war ich ... Ich hab' immer jern in de Bücher gelesen ... Und wegen's Heiraten! Ach, du lieber Gott, wen denn? - So einen Plebejer, wie sie da hinten in de Fabrik arbeiten, will ich jar nich ... Der versäuft doch bloss den Lohn und schlägt einen ... Ich will einen *feinen* Mann, und wenn ich den nicht kriegen kann, will ich lieber jar keinen ... Und Kurt ist immer fein zu mir gewesen ... da hab' ich keine ruppigen Worte gelernt ... Die hab' ich hier im Haus' gelernt. Und ich will 'raus hier. Ich brauch' dich überhaupt nich mit deine Wachsamkeit ... Mädchen wie ich jeht nich unter! (78)

Apart from this seething expression of frustration, *Die Ehre* is conspicuously lacking in specific details of proletarian existence, such as life in the factory, pay scales and worker unity. The exploitation remains implicit, only finding expression at one other point in Robert's passionate denunciation of his former employers who imply that he might be guilty of theft:

> ... Dies ist der Tag der Abrechnung. Machen wir also das Konto klar ... Das Konto zwischen den Vorder- und den Hinterhäusern. Wir arbeiten für euch ... wir geben unsern Schweiss und unser Herzblut für euch hin ... Derweilen verführt ihr unsre Schwestern und unsre Töchter und bezahlt uns ihre Schande mit dem Gelde, das wir euch verdient haben ... Das nennt ihr Wohltaten erweisen! [...] Ihr stahlt mir die Ehre meines Hauses, denn ehrlich war es, wenn's auch euer Hinterhaus war. - Ihr stahlt mir die Herzen der Meinigen, denn ob sie auch schmutzige Bettler sind, lieb hatt' ich sie doch, - ihr stahlt mir das Kissen, auf dem ich mein Haupt niederlegen wollte, um auszuruhn von der Arbeit für euch, - ihr stahlt mir den Heimatsboden - ihr stahlt mir die Liebe zu den Menschen und das Vertrauen zu Gott - ihr stahlt mir Frieden, Schamgefühl und gutes Gewissen - die Sonne vom Himmel habt ihr mir herabgestohlen - ihr seid die Diebe - ihr! (119-120)

Even this attack, however, is rendered less effective because of the distracting elements of conventional theater, such as the revolver, the declaration of love and the intervention of the *deus ex machina*, Graf Trast.

On the whole, *Die Ehre*, in spite of the author's clear sympathy for the working class, presents us with no fundamental analysis and no solutions.[10] The hero disassociates himself from the proletariat, and his family revel in their new wealth, glad to be free of his uncomfortable upper-class moralizing. We see that while Sudermann does portray a worker type that is reduced to crudity and ignorance by poverty, his intention is not to penetrate the depths of proletarian suffering. The living hell of Hauptmann's weavers is as alien to Sudermann's workers as the comfortable life of the upper-class Mühlingks. His characters live shabbily, but they do not starve; they live with dull envy, but not hatred. Their poverty is always banal, never horrifying; they are essentially survivors, flexible enough to adjust to the demands of their existence. Thus Heinecke is not devastated by his daughter's liaison but soon forgets it in his delight at the Mühlingk largesse. Several critics voiced their dismay over this scene. Konrad von Bevern, for example, stated his unequivocal disgust at such a representation of the German working class, saying:

> Wäre unser Volk wirklich in Sudermanns Figuren

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[10] Franz Mehring, *Aufsätze zur deutschen Literatur von Hebbel bis Schweichel* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1961), p. 247.

> dargestellt - dann müsste man sein Haupt verhüllen und sich schämen, diesem Volke anzugehören.[11]

Heinecke, like the workers of *Stein unter Steinen*, expects nothing and demands nothing. He is no rebel or Social Democrat, and the banal plane of his life is disturbed by very little.

In summing up, we see that Heinecke's character, while extremely realistic in the dramatic sense, appears too one-sided to be wholly genuine. His childishness, servility and greedy vulgarity combine to create a sordid, yet pathetic figure, saved from actual malevolence only by his fundamental stupidity. The other workers follow this pattern (even Frau Heinecke's loving nature seems part of her lack of intelligence). Where, for example, Social Democrat sentiments do appear, they are voiced by Michalski, who is clearly a parasite on society. That characters like Michalski did exist is, however, confirmed by Mehring who felt that:

> Menschen dieser Art laufen zu Tausenden in dem parasitischen Lumpenproletariat der heutigen Gesellschaft herum. Sie in photographischer Naturtreue zu zeigen, war vielleicht nicht so schwer, aber sie plastisch zu verkörpern als Produkte der Bourgeoiswirtschaft, das ist eine in ihrer Art bedeutende Leistung, die dem Dichter in hohem Grade gelungen ist.[12]

Sudermann's negative image of the worker concentrates primarily on his personality, avoiding any reference to labour issues. Although he does briefly attempt to consider the exploitation of the workers, the emphasis is unmistakably on the dilemma of the individual when faced with differing but equally valid concepts of honour.

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[11] Konrad von Bevern, *Sudermann* (Halle a.S.: Verlag von Eugen Strien, 1892), p. 16.

[12] Franz Mehring, *Aufsätze zur deutschen Literatur von Hebbel bis Schweichel*, p. 245.

Stein unter Steinen (1905)

The next play that treated the working-class appeared sixteen years later, and dealt exclusively with the rehabilitation of ex-convicts. Again we see that the work does not address itself to the specific problems of the German proletariat. *Stein unter Steinen* remains an effective, sometimes amusing study of working-class personalities and their private problems, without any emphasis on external factors. And yet again, the workers here exist to support the main message of the play. Therefore, *Stein unter Steinen* dismisses socialist theories, economic considerations, worker unity, trade unions and politics to concentrate upon the difficult workings of the human spirit.

The character of the watchman Eichholz is almost identical to that of Heinecke in *Die Ehre*. These older workers appear foolish, boastful and pathetically pompous, given to praising their own achievements and easily manipulated by more forceful and cunning personalities. Perhaps for this reason, Bernhard Stein described the play as a "schwere Beschimpfung des Arbeiterstandes".[13] In the same way that Michalski can cause Heinecke to reject Robert, Gottlingk can talk Eichholz into attempted murder. Eichholz appears as a ignorant, vain character, who keeps asserting his honour and reminding others of his years of service, in the military and out of it. As with Heinecke, there is also a tendency to complain and criticise constantly; his excessive drinking and total lack of emotional control create the impression of a character that is sometimes comic but by no means positive. As with Heinecke, it is difficult to believe that socio-economic exploitation has ruined him; the general image is that of a person whose own stupidity and weakness have been responsible for his present condition.

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[13] Bernhard Stein, *Literarische Bilder aus neuester Zeit* (Ravensburg: Verlag von Friedrich Alber, 1910), p. 108.

The author stresses Eichholz's basic harmlessness by the simple device of allowing him to break off his blood-thirsty threats against the hated Biegler with pathetic complaints about his health and floods of tears. Every line Eichholz utters has nothing to do with his position as a worker, but rather with his essentially weak and foolish nature. His life is wasted in the pursuit of trifles which will assuage his self-esteem and his self-pity. His hate of Biegler is due to the blow dealt to his ego when the ex-convict takes his job as night-watchman:

> Auf meinem Platz sitzt 'n Mörder. Das halt' ich nich aus. Da jeh' ich ins Wasser. Da nehm' ich eine Jiftpille zu mir. Und dann verkauf' ich mir an die Anetomie ...[14]

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[14] Hermann Sudermann, *Stein unter Steinen*, in *Dramatische Werke*, III (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1923), 244.

Thus Eichholz's easy tears, his maudlin nature, his lack of intelligence, all constitute a worker type like Heinecke that is undoubtedly an interesting character study, but one that has very little to do with the burning issues concerning the German proletariat at the time.

The other workers in this play are depicted outside a factory setting. In this moderately sized stone-mason business, we see no labour discussions, no strikes, no discontent or real strife (except on a personal level), and no talk of politics or salaries. It is a hermetic little world that Sudermann portrays here, sealed off from all conflict, and concerning itself solely with psychological problems, such as the future of Jakob Biegler, Marie's loneliness and Lore's mute humiliation. *Stein unter Steinen* is the only work that provides detailed descriptions of the work-place, its techniques and its tools. For Heinrich Hart, however, this meticulous research was only another example of Sudermann's desire to keep pace with his dramatic rivals in the theater.[15] Such detail is conspicuous by its absence in *Die Ehre* or *Heilige Zeit*. The characterization of the workers is again realistic and even dryly humorous, without the excruciating sentimentality revealed in the Zarncke household. This sentimentality is carried over into the worker-employer relationship, but not into the characters of the workers themselves. Zarncke treats his men with patriarchal benevolence, giving their children sweets and greeting their wives during work breaks. These men are friendly with Zarncke, and at times even jovial. The relationship is man-to-man, unlike the obseqious behaviour that the Mühlingks expect from their employees. A change in perspective is visible here; many of these workers are now portrayed as independent characters who enjoy exercising their talents. Ida Axelrod feels that this is the very real "Stolz der heutigen Arbeiter auf ihren Beruf, ihr Selbstbewusstsein bezüglich ihrer Rolle in der gegenwärtigen Gesellschaft".[14] Zarncke himself is deeply concerned about the welfare of his men, especially those he helps on their release from prison. This excessive pathos is best seen in his dealings with Struve, who is responsible for the burglary at the yard. Zarncke is well aware of this, but does his utmost to protect Struve from the law, even going so far as to feel guilty for having called in the police in the first place.

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[15] Heinrich Hart, *Ausgewählte Aufsätze. Reisebilder vom Theater* (Berlin: Egon Fleischel & Co., 1907), pp. 300-307.

In *Stein unter Steinen* we see Sudermann's positive type of worker for the first time in the figures of Struve and Biegler. While emotionally opposite sides of the coin, they nevertheless reveal similar traits. They are both survivors, tough men who surmount every crisis by summoning up unsuspected reserves of physical and mental endurance. The author's portrayal of these two figures is an extremely detailed character study, down to the instinctive hand movements used so effectively in *Die Ehre*. Struve, for example, drops his lunch, but picks it up, dusts it off and eats it, unimpressed by hygienic considerations. Biegler's movements, on the other hand, have less to do with his proletarian origins than the acute apprehensions of a man just released from prison.

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[14] Dr. Ida Axelrod, *Hermann Sudermann* (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1907), p. 75.

It is an interesting point that the sole reference to the inferior position of workers and their handicaps comes from Struve, who neutralizes its value by making his prison experience a joke:

> Überhaupt, was bist du hier? Und was bin *ich* hier? Und was sind wir alle hier? ... Dreck sind wir. Hoch über dir kommen erst die Steinmetzen ... Und *da* hoch drüber die Bildhauer. Und denn *noch* höher der Polier ... Und *denn* gar erst ... ach! Dort hab' ich immer in de erschte Klasse gearbeit't ... Weisse Binde hab' ich tragen dürfen. Tischältster bin ich gewesen. Das ist mehr wie Polier. Das is wie 'n Jeneral ... Das kannste alles werden, wenn de ins Zuchthaus kommst ... Karri-ere kannste machen. Ja. (224)

Thus we see that what might have been an accurate social statement about the position of workers is rendered immediately ineffective by the subsequent introduction of the comic element and the mirth of the men present.

Biegler is the positive type of worker that appears from this point, reliable, taciturn and stubborn. Given a job by Zarncke, he discharges his duties faithfully but timidly. Gradually, as the harrowing memories of rejection fade, one sees the real man emerge in brief moments. Sudermann portrays him as a man who takes pride in his profession and enjoys the camaraderie of his fellow workers. Again, there is no mention of politics; Biegler fights his battles alone without the support of left-wing doctrines. He respects Zarncke and accepts without question his superior position in society. Mehring, perhaps for this reason, unequivocally rejected *Stein unter Steinen*:

> Dem Schauspiel fehlt vollständig die psychologische Vertiefung, die der Stoff gebieterisch verlangt; wir erfahren nichts von den inneren Kämpfen des Helden, der von Missverständnissen und Zufällen hin und her gestossen wird; die wohlwollende Hand eines Bourgeois streckt sich dem Zuchthäusler entgegen, um ihn in die bürgerliche Gesellschaft zurückzuführen, und an dem blinden Vorurteil von Arbeitern gegen den "Mörder" findet er das einzige ernsthafte Hindernis seiner moralischen Wiederherstellung. Man könnte beinahe annehmen, dass Herr Sudermann eine Satire habe schreiben wollen.[17]

Biegler's most obvious characteristic, which is repeated in the communist workers of *Heilige Zeit*, is his dour, "verbissen" nature, expressing itself in obdurate resistance to any pressure, and a capability for tough action where necessary.

There are, of course, obvious parallels in the author's depiction of peasants and workers. These qualities of endurance under stress, pride and independence appear in both categories. However, there are unmistakable differences as well. The element of idyllic harmony of personality is naturally absent, and, unlike the peasants, Sudermann's workers show little ambition in life. While Alma and the Heineckes are obsessed with money, they show none of the vigorous zeal of the peasants. Sudermann's workers often resent their poverty, but do not struggle to rise through hard labour. Another interesting omission on the part of the author is the failure to touch upon the theme of the rise of industrialization and its catastrophic effect on the *Handwerker* class, portrayed so vividly by Kretzer in *Meister Timpe*. In his portrayal of peasant life, however, one detects the insiduous poison of urban stresses seeping into the peaceful world of the countryside. The almost absolute omission of religion as an influence is also in stark contrast to the peasants. Though it is of extreme importance (whether pagan or Christian) for the rural population, there is only one brief reference to faith in *Die Ehre*, and it is evident that the spiritual teachings are quite superficial. None of the other worker types show any interest in God or faith. Biegler, for example, rejects without hesitation what he feels are the dogmatic assertions of Christianity. Speaking to Lore about the murder he committed, he says:

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[17] Franz Mehring, *Zur Literaturgeschichte von Hebbel bis Gorki* (Berlin: Soziologische Verlagsanstalt, 1929), p. 130.

> ... Weil der nu da lang lag, darum war mein Leben verdorben. Nu sagt der Pastor: "Sühnen!" Ja, nun sühne mal, wenn der Wahnsinn schon hinter dir sitzt ... Was kann ein zu Schanden geprügelter Hund viel sühnen? Seine Wunden kann er sich lecken ... Mehr kann er nich. (252)

Perhaps in accord with the shifting population of urban centres, Sudermann also places far less emphasis on families and property. The Heineckes are revealed, however dismally, as a family, but, except for Robert, the bonds of blood sit lightly on them. In *Stein unter Steinen* and *Heilige Zeit*, the author supplies almost no details about families or household life. Thus Sudermann's workers are fundamentally rootless, with their nameless wives and their invisible homes. This is in sharp contrast to the detail he lavishes on the habits and family life of his Junkers or his peasants.

On the whole, *Stein unter Steinen* represents a partial step forward in technique. Workers like Biegler and Struve are more complex and definitely more sympathetic. There is a new element of wry humour in the author's portrayal that leads to a less one-sided characterization. Certain stylistic tools are used again, such as the Berliner dialect, body language and clearly defined speech habits. Sudermann has devoted much time to a careful study of the main figures, taking account of not only good points but negative ones. Struve may be a sly, witty and thoroughly likeable character, but one does not forget that he is also incurably dishonest; the earlier figures of Michalski and Auguste (*Die Ehre*), on the other hand, are wholly sordid.

However, while *Stein unter Steinen* does provide a less simplistic portrayal of the German worker, it still does not create a satisfactory image of this figure in the wider context of socio-economic issues. The message of the play confines itself (even more obviously than in *Die Ehre*) to the welfare of the ex-convict and not the proletariat. As Hubert Walter puts it:

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> Der Primat der Idee vor der Person hat dem sonst prächtigen Drama "Stein unter Steinen" nicht unerheblich geschadet. [...] Die Gegensätze zwischen den Menschen werden weit aufgerissen; auf der einen Seite stehen die Guten, meist Stiefkinder des Lebens, auf der anderen Seite die Bösen, hochfahrend und dabei geistig beschränkt und minderwertig. Der Dichter greift dem Weltenrichter vor, er hilft der Tugend zu ihrem Verdienste und lässt die Bösewichter zuschanden werden. Eine innere

> Entwicklung der Charaktere gibt es nicht; die Personen spielen die Rolle, zu der sie prädestiniert sind.[18]

As such, *Stein unter Steinen* also represents a retreat from even the limited attack on exploitation found in *Die Ehre*.

Heilige Zeit (1921)

In the first of his trilogy of war plays, Sudermann introduces several workers, four of whom receive special attention. Yet again, we see that the function of these figures is to support the main theme of the play, which is to represent the effect of the outbreak of war on all levels of the populace. *Heilige Zeit* shows four such workers being carried away by an irresistible surge of patriotism into supporting the war effort. In Graf Sewitz they see at first only another representative of the oppressor class who has been forced by circumstances to deal directly with them; as the scene progresses, however, his passionate appeal to forget class enmity in the common cause against the foe is so effective that even these dour men soon forget their ideological reservations.

As a type, all four follow the pattern set by Biegler. They are proud, independent and suspicious characters who show respect but no servility towards their employer. Again, as in *Stein unter Steinen*, worker-employer relations are depicted as excellent. The relationship of the factory-owner

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[18] Hubert Walter, *Sudermann und die Franzosen*, p. 128.

Stern with these men is friendly and almost one of equals. In fact, his sympathies (like Zarncke's) appear to lie with them. When he points out to Graf Sewitz that the workers are perhaps even better Germans than either of them, he bases this statement on the exploitation they have suffered:

> Ich will mich mit Herrn Grafen durchaus nicht auf eine Stufe stellen, aber unsereins hat von seinem Deutschtum bisher nur Profit gehabt - jene nich.[19]

There is no hint of any discontent on the part of the workers about Stern's position or authority; the few proletarian slogans voiced in this short scene appear a perfunctory acknowledgement, intended apparently only to show how even ideological convictions gave way under the emotional impact of the war. Deeskow, for example, begins the conversation on an unfriendly note:

> Wir tun schon weit mehr als unsere Pflicht, Herr Stern, aber nu können se bitten kommen, die Herren Jrafen. Sonst waren wir ihnen wie Dreck auf der Strasse. (112)

However, by the end of the scene, the workers' resistance is overcome, and Deeskow consents to discuss the possibility of putting in more hours to help the war effort.

The same situation exists here as in *Die Ehre* or *Stein unter Steinen*. These workers are and remain token figures, realistically depicted, but nevertheless quite superficial. The technique is repeated in the scene of a communist rally, where two workers who have sincerely applauded the pacifist rhetoric of their leader voice their determination to teach the enemy (especially the Russians) a lesson when they rejoin their regiments.

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[19] Hermann Sudermann, *Heilige Zeit*, p. 109.

The message takes precedence over the characterization of the worker type, whereas in the scenes involving upper-class figures, the author dwells in detail on their personal lives and conflicts. While *Heilige Zeit* shows for the first time the proletariat in a factory setting, it is significant that one learns nothing about working conditions, rates of pay or the private lives of these men. Indeed, none of them even possess a first name, and one is even referred to as "der vierte Arbeiter". It is an interesting fact that Sudermann portrays in the same play the figures of the Junker and the Jewish tycoon with far more detail and sympathy. His admiration for the industry of the country nobility even finds expression here, as when Sewitz informs the workers that he, the Junker, works just as hard as they do to provide them with the bread they eat.

SUMMARY

In this analysis, we see that the worker figure in Sudermann's novels and plays only forms a very minor category appearing at long intervals after works dealing primarily with the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie. A certain sympathy in the portrayal of these characters is undeniable. In *Im Zwielicht*, for example, one of his earliest works, Sudermann unmercifully satirizes the society ladies who dedicate themselves to improving the morality of the proletariat as a social game, ignoring their economic plight.

On the other hand, the author's depiction of workers remains highly effective, but unmistakably one-dimensional. The more negative character type is vain, boastful and highly emotional, given to unembarrassed greed and ignorance. The positive type is generally dour, "verbissen", independent but never too rebellious, and possessed of qualities of endurance and pride.

Given the time-span, the absence in this group of all but the most rudimentary links with the controversial social and political ideals associated with the proletariat would seem to imply either a lack of real interest or a blind spot in Sudermann's poetic vision. The workers therefore do not constitute a major category and where they do appear, they are invariably, and, in spite of all sympathy, firmly relegated to second place, subordinate to the main theme of the work.

VII. THE STUDENTS

The students who appear in the works of Hermann Sudermann are generally portrayed as inexperienced young idealists who are easily influenced for good or evil by those more sophisticated. On the whole, they are neither intellectuals nor rebels against society; their rejection of out-dated traditions, where it does occur, usually lacks any real virulence. They seem to represent a type that yearns for new ideals, without the maturity to judge the validity of the object of their faith. As such, these types are easily employed to satirize the social and political beliefs of the period. As Jürgen Schwarz puts it:

> Zu allen Zeiten galten die Studenten als die Seismographen geistiger und gesellschaftspolitischer Entwicklungen. In ihren Diskussionen und Aktionen spiegelte sich immer wieder die geistige Bewegung der gesamten Gesellschaft.[20]

Being depicted as naive and idealistic, they are especially prone to confusion and euphoria. Under the Kaiser, they are torn between liberalism and the iron rule of their fraternities; on the outbreak of war, they are determined to shed their last drop of blood for Germany; and, in the anarchy following the war, they are swept away by communist rhetoric. The importance of this type lies therefore in its indirect expression of the author's views on the turbulent history of his country.

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[20] Jürgen Schwarz, "Deutsche Studenten und Politik im 19. Jahrhundert," *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, 20 (1969), 72.

A. THE MAJOR CHARACTERS

1. The Meyhöfer brothers (*Frau Sorge*, 1887)
2. Kurt Brenckenberg (*Es War*, 1893)
3. Norbert von Völkerlingk (*Es lebe das Leben*, 1902)
4. Reinhold Hartmeyer (*Sturmgeselle Sokrates*, 1903)
5. Siegfried Markuse (*Sturmgeselle Sokrates*)
6. Fritz Strübel (*Die ferne Prinzessin*, 1907)
7. Fritz von Etzenberg (*Die indische Lilie*, 1911)
8. Robert Messerschmidt (*Der Lebensplan*, 1911)
9. Anna Söhnlin (*Der gute Ruf*, 1915)
10. Sebald Hammann (*Heilige Zeit*, 1921)
11. Georg von Sewitz (*Heilige Zeit*)
12. Kurt Erich von Sewitz (*Heilige Zeit*)
13. Felix Stern (*Heilige Zeit*)
14. Harry Eggebrecht (*Heilige Zeit*)
15. Ruth Stern (*Heilige Zeit*)
16. Udo von Hecklingen (*Notruf*, 1921)
17. Fritz Kühne (*Der tolle Professor*, 1926)

Frau Sorge (1887)

The first appearance of the student type in Sudermann's works is negative in the extreme. Paul Meyhöfer's older brothers are represented by the author (no doubt out of the necessity for contrast) as thoroughly selfish and vain characters, who live off Paul by exploiting his admiration of them. On their rare visits home, their vanity finds expression even in earlier days in attempts to impress their younger brother with their academic achievements. Paul himself takes this superiority for granted:

> Er hielt sich für ein durchaus untergeordnetes Wesen den Brüdern gegenüber und hatte es schon längst aufgegeben, ihnen jemals zu gleichen. Wenn sie zu den Ferien heimkamen, Samtmützen auf den wallenden Haaren, bunte Bänder quer über die Brust gespannt - denn sie gehörten einer verbotenen Schülerverbindung an - so schaute er zu ihnen empor wie zu Wesen aus höheren Welten. Begierig lauschte er, wenn sie untereinander über Sallust und Cicero und die Dramen des Äschylos zu sprechen begannen - und sie sprachen gern davon, schon allein, um ihm zu imponieren.[21]

This portrayal of students in a negative light reveals a few interesting points. It is a one-sided characterization, with the brothers appearing totally self-centred and parasitic. There is no idealism here, only greed and superficiality. In *Es War*, however, one detects the first signs of a more complex, less humourless approach.

Es War (1894)

The character of Kurt Brenckenberg in this novel forms a sub-plot in a work primarily dealing with the East Prussian Junker class. From this point on in Sudermann's novels and plays, the student type is depicted satirically by the author, a portrayal that is also tinged with a certain humorous tolerance for the follies of youth. While these figures remain foolish or egoistic, they are intrinsically harmless. The image is now of students who are carried away by excessive idealism, esprit de corps or simple inexperience; the author may satirize them, but there is no real attack on their behaviour.

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[21] Hermann Sudermann, *Frau Sorge*, p. 39.

Kurt Brenckenberg is just such a character. Like the Meyhöfer brothers, he is vain, boastful and a parasite on his impoverished family, but, in spite of all this, the venom in the portrayal of the Meyhöfers is lacking. Kurt is depicted with humour as a frivolous young man who dislikes work, indulges in romantic escapades, joins his father in drinking bouts and generally enjoys life's bounty. His vanity is based entirely on his membership in a student corps and his behaviour and even his clothes proclaim his delight in conformity:

> Dem sorglichen Mutterauge entpuppte er sich als Besitzer eines braun und gelb karierten Anzugs, dessen Jacke sehr eng und dessen Hose sehr weit war, zweier Korpsbänder, zweier Bierzipfel, in den Couleurfarben gehalten, einer elfenbeinernen Kravattennadel in Form des Couleurzirkels, zweier Manschettenknöpfe mit demselben Couleurzirkel, eines goldenen Armbandes mit einem falschen Georgstaler daran, der statt des Schiffes den schon genannten Couleurzirkel trug, eines ebenhölzernen Renommierstockes, auf dessen elfenbeinernem Knopfe der Couleurzirkel erhaben ausgemeisselt war, eines Notizbuches, mit Couleurzirkeln vollgemalt, und eines Portemonnaies, das weiter nichts Silbernes aufwies als das Schloss mit darein geätztem Couleurzirkel. (105)

The humour in this description is unmistakable. Kurt appears as foolish rather than contemptible, and the author is at pains to portray him as undergoing a youthful phase of inexperience and high spirits. Thus, when reproached by his father for wasting his time, his answer reveals a naivety and arrogance that is clearly intended to provoke mirth, not annoyance:

> "Ich verstehe nicht, Vater," sagte er, "wie du so etwas Bummeln nennen kannst. Solche Zeiten scheinbar tatenlosen Wachsens und Gedeihens sind uns Menschen ebenso vonnöten wie der Saat der Winterschlaf. Während ich scheinbar faulenze, arbeite ich unaufhörlich an meiner Individualität. Ich bilde mein Menschentum heraus. Ich lasse meine Persönlichkeit ausreifen. - Das gilt mehr als alle Buchgelehrsamkeit." (365)

For the first time as well, we detect traces of idealism in a major student character. This trait is again treated with good-humoured tolerance. When Kurt considers the ways to fulfil his ambitions, he is determined to leave no stone unturned; if necessary, he will even attack the government as Lassalle did. As he thinks regretfully:

> Damals wusste man als Stürmer und Dränger, was man mit sich beginnen sollte. Man ging auf die Barrikaden, bahnte der Freiheit eine Gasse und liess sich dabei von den Schergen der Tyrannen niedermetzeln ... Aber seit siebzig gab es keine Tyrannen. Auch machte man keine Revolution mehr. Das war nicht gentlemanlike und durchaus unmodern. (362)

The character of Kurt Brenckenberg thus provides us with the basic traits of the Sudermann student type. It is a character that displays good qualities as well as bad, but one that is in essence naive, egoistic and full of a youthful exuberance that finds its expression in the antics of the student corps, a starry-eyed idealism and a clumsy goodwill. These characters are rarely intellectuals or real non-conformists; on the contrary, the author generally portrays their rebellion as a short-lived phase before they adjust with ease to their society. When Kurt receives a flogging from Leo, he loses not only his standing in the corps, but also his self-respect; however, the novel concludes with the information that he has settled down to the life of a model student. In the same way, Norbert von Völkerlingk (*Es lebe das Leben*) may publish an attack on duelling, but it is clear that he is no radical or intellectual. His ideas come from Beate, and are by no means original. In the case of Anna Söhnlin (*Der gute Ruf*) we see that she is intelligent enough to discern the banality of high society, but again it is evident that she is no rebel, being content to settle for an eventual marriage with Max Termählen.

Der tolle Professor (1926)

The most detailed portrayal of a student type repeats and elaborates on these character traits in Sudermann's late novel, a study of the turbulent Bismarckian period. The figure of Fritz Kühne, the young law student and idealistic member of the Cheruskan fraternity in the University of Königsberg, appears as the exact psychological counterpart to the acerbic Professor Sieburth, a cynical loner who becomes entangled in the conflicting political movements of the time. Much of the impact of this work stems from Sieburth's analysis of contemporary problems, such as the increasingly dangerous idolisation of the Hohenzollerns and the authoritarian Bismarck, the weakness and infighting of the opposing parties, the role of the Junkers in a modern Germany, and, above all, the dilemma of the intellectual, trapped in the cross-currents of this era and struggling to maintain his integrity against those who are committed to one system of values or another.

Fritz's function in this novel is mainly to act as a sounding-board, an attentive audience to which Sieburth reveals his non-conformist thoughts on the problems and choices facing Germans at this point in their country's history. As Busse puts it:

> Ein überlegener Kopf und neben ihm ein Repräsentant der besten, reinsten Kraft der jungen Generation erleben, denkend und handelnd, den Umschwung der alten in die neue Zeit. [...] Ausserhalb der Parteien stehend, gewinnen sie Einblick hinter Spiel und Kulisse der sogenannten Gegenwart und sehen die Tragödie des Volkes, die in Jahrhunderten nach ganz anderen Gesetzen sich abspielt, als das Auf und Ab, Gewinn und Verlust der Generationen erkennen lässt.[22]

While Sieburth is marked for inevitable tragedy, the character of Fritz develops in the course of the work into a clear-sighted, tolerant personality, whose new maturity, honed to an edge by Sieburth's polemics, permits him to recognize Bismarck's faults as well as the service he has performed for Germany. The mad professor is driven to suicide, but his idealistic student grows into a German citizen in the fullest sense of the term.

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[22] Kurt Busse, *Hermann Sudermann. Sein Werk und sein Wesen*, p. 195.

Der tolle Professor begins with Fritz's introduction to Sieburth's thought-provoking lectures. Up to this point, the student is a complete conformist, revering the Kaiser and the Iron Chancellor and proud of his membership in a prestigious corps. He accepts traditions and authority without questions and is a unsophisticated, idealistic boy who gives no trouble. Given his temperament, he is at first shocked, then deeply stirred by Sieburth's attack on all he has been taught to hold sacred. Sudermann thus emphasizes from the very beginning Fritz' lack of intellectual independence, a trait that allows him to be easily swayed by others:

> Fritz Kühne sass in zitternder Spannung da und wusste nicht, wie der unsichtbaren Rutenstreiche Herr zu werden, die ihn umschwirrten. Ein dunkles Gefühl sagte ihm, dass hier ein Rebellentum am Werke war, das gegen alles Sturm lief, was ihm so lange wert und heilig gewesen, und dass er nicht zaudern würde, mit fliegenden Fahnen zu ihm überzugehen.[23]

The contrast with Sieburth only serves to emphasize this bewildered innocence. The professor is a cynic; Fritz is an idealist who trusts the authority of his superiors. Sieburth is a Don Juan; Fritz tends to treat women with reverence. Even his memories of his sisters' childhood friends and of the peasant women on the estates are more lyrical than sexual, extolling the mystery of their womanhood and not just their bodies. Sieburth is a non-conformist who moves on the razor's edge between discretion and veiled insult; Fritz accepts without question the prejudices of his fraternity.

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[23] Hermann Sudermann, *Der tolle Professor*, p. 17.

The character development of this student comes about through Sieburth, who strips away the glittering veneer of Prussian imperial and military glamour to display the arrogance and servility beneath. Fritz is therefore soon carried away by his professor's slashing rhetoric into a phase of rebellion that culminates in an open breach with his outraged fraternity. The last step on his road to maturity comes with his attack on Sieburth, who has unwillingly joined the Conservatives. Not realizing his motives and seeing his actions only as a betrayal of the worst kind, he later comes to the painful recognition that his days of idealism and boundless trust are finally over. The novel concludes with Sieburth's isolation from the academic community and his eventual suicide. In spite of the destruction of his work and the hypocritical mourning of the university the author makes it clear that the professor's views, incisive, sceptical and humane, will live on in the influence he has had on the hard-won maturity of Fritz Kühne.

SUMMARY

This analysis indicates that the basic student type in Sudermann's works reveals characteristic traits of idealism, naivety, and a definite tendency to accept eventually society's norms. While some appear as intelligent, the only real intellectual is Felix Stern; the others display little independence of thought or judgement. Indeed, they are readily, even gladly influenced to different courses of action by people or events. The author does satirize their egoism and youthful exuberance, but it is clearly done with tolerance, even humour.

Most of these students appear to serve as a contrast to the more self-sufficient or less egoistic major figures of the particular work. As such, while their own characters rarely undergo any change, they provide an effective, often amusing means of making a point. The most caustic criticism is reserved for the harmful influence of the student fraternities but, on the whole, the individual student fares better. However, even this criticism seems mild when compared to the vitriolic description of fraternity carousing in Heinrich Mann's *Der Untertan* (1918).

The fundamental literary value of this minor category lies perhaps in its portrayal as a mirror image for the distortions and excesses of society. These students reflect, for better or worse, Sudermann's view of the complex social and political attitudes in Germany after 1870. Their well-meaning credulity and tendency to exaggerate enables the author to satirize not only this idealism but also the prevailing norms by revealing the ineptitude of the young people who cling to them. Thus the real force of Sudermann's political satire seems to have found much of its expression in his portrayal of the German student.

VIII. THE ARTISTS

The specific value of an analysis of this particular category lies in the uncovering of Sudermann's own very personal view of the type. The problematic position of artists in society is a theme dealt with by many writers in a tradition stretching back to the *Sturm und Drang* and the *Romantik*. Their special talents and qualities tend to be portrayed against the backdrop of a bourgeios world in which they generally finds themselves set apart. An artist is often depicted in an impossible position, that of the gifted outsider, who finds perhaps admiration, but no real understanding of his special temperament or needs. As Laserstein puts it:

> Das europäische Bürgertum bildete, gegründet auf wirtschaftliche Sicherheit und seelische Unerschütterlichkeit, eine feste Mauer, die das Gemeinwesen gegen jeden Einbruch ungesicherte und erschütternder Elemente schützte und jede Erscheinung nach dem Masstab bürgerlicher Nützlichkeit beurteilte. In dieser Gesellschaftsordnung war für den Künstler kein Platz vorgesehen, und wenn er dennoch geboren wurde, so war es sein Schicksal, an der Gesellschaft zu leiden und zu scheitern.[24]

The bourgeois society is usually portrayed in such works as stable, conventional and wholly alien to him. Yet the artist is often depicted as fascinated by the security of this world, drawn to it against his will, frequently yearning

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[24] Käte Laserstein, *Die Gestalt des bildenden Künstlers in der Dichtung* (Berlin und Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1931), p. 60.

(*Tonio Kröger*) to belong, to be part of this general community, to suffer no longer the burden of being different. He admires the enjoyable properties of the bourgeoisie, the vigour, the robust conquest of life's challenges, the absence of tormenting introspection or self-doubt.

Sudermann's artists follow this pattern to a great extent. About half the characters in this category are portrayed as musicians, while the rest are mostly painters. The women in this category appear basically (except for Karen) as performing artists; the men tend to be portrayed as creative artists. The author seems to have created only two writers and one dancer in this category. In choosing to depict so many artists, he apparently followed the trend in selecting the more bohemian professions (as contrasted to the perhaps less unconventional image of a writer) in order to make the details of the portrayal easier and truly convincing. As Helene Goldschmidt says:

> Die Tendenz der Dichter, einen Maler zum Träger ihrer Ideen zu machen, beruht jedenfalls auf der Vorstellung, dass sein Schaffen leichter anschaulich zu machen ist als das des Dichters.[25]

In Sudermann's case, the effect is also to increase the contrast between the worlds of the bourgeois and the sphere of the artist. The early elements of this theme, so characteristic for his works, are to be found even in his first major collection of short stories titled *Im Zwielicht*.

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[25] Dr. Helene Goldschmidt, *Das deutsche Künstlerdrama von Goethe bis Wagner* (Weimar: Alexander Duncker Verlag, 1925), p. 4.

Zwanglose Geschichten (1887). In these tales, Sudermann reveals the artist as the crass individualist, celebrated by society and manipulating it in his turn. Here too, we discover the author's understanding of the absolute freedom required by the creative artist while also presenting the other side of the coin, i.e., the often foolish reverence of society for the artist that only takes account of the traditionally romantic aura that surrounds him. Therefore, the general theme associated with the artist figure in Sudermann's works is that of ceaseless tension and conflict with a bourgeois society that not only fails to understand the peculiar independence needed by the artist, but persists in forcing its cherished prejudices and illusions upon him. As Erna Levy points out, this is by no means an unusual technique:

> In einem Künstlerdrama, das einen Konflikt des Künstlers darstellt, muss die Welt des Künstlers einen Gegenpol erhalten. Der natürlichste Gegenpol ist die reale Welt. Fast alle diese Künstlerdramen unserer Betrachtung lassen sich irgendwie auf die Frage, wie sich der Künstler zur realen Welt stellt, vereinfachend zurückführen. [...] Das Problem des Künstlers wird jedesmal aus der jeweiligen Auffassung des Künstlers und der jeweiligen Auffassung des realen Lebens einer Zeit zu erklären sein.[26]

The general character traits we see are therefore moulded by the conflicting demands of profession and environment. The artists in Sudermann's works are almost invariably depicted as hedonists, spoilt by the flattery of society, highly strung and jealous of their freedom. Generally appearing as strongly sexual, even promiscuous characters who are incapable of maintaining stable relationships, they are, however, completely dedicated to their craft. As a rule, they are surrounded by traditional families or conventional societies and the conflict that arises from the clash of these two opposing worlds provides the author with his theme. In this category, the emphasis is thus placed on the dilemma of the artist in society; Sudermann's concept of genius usually takes second place.

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[26] Erna Levy, *Die Gestalt des Künstlers im deutschen Drama von Goethe bis Hebbel* (Nendeln/ Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint Limited, 1967), p. 136.

The character of the artist remains from beginning to end a problematic one. On the one hand, it is conceded that he requires freedom of thought and action, a precious spontaneity that will nourish his creative urges. On the other hand, the claims of bourgeois society also appear as not wholly unjustified. Responsible for this dichotomy is Sudermann's own ambivalent attitude to the family and society. He saw the family as providing emotional warmth and stability, but also as a severely restricted sphere of provincial intolerance that frequently succeeds in shattering the fragile link between artist and muse. From this view comes the dilemma that cripples the majority of Sudermann's artists in their careers: what does the gifted individual owe family and society and to what extent must society yield to the arrogance of genius without corrupting it? On the one hand these artists require emotional security, a love which in its peace and purity encourages them to greater efforts. Dagmar finds it in her cherished younger sister (*Die Sterne, die man nicht begehrt*); Willy discovers, then loses it in Kitty (*Sodoms Ende*); and for Magda, only her child is more important than her art (*Heimat*). Sudermann's artists usually reject traditional family life for the greater joys of exercising their genius, but some nostalgia draws them back to the essential warmth and stability represented by bourgeois institutions. Describing this ambivalence, Hermann Granzow says:

> Man sucht heimlich das öffentlich Geschmähte, liebt und hasst in einem Gedanken, strebt verzweifelt nach Gemeinschaft und kompensiert diesen Trieb, den man sich ungern eingesteht, durch krampfhaftes Pochen auf die selbstgewählte (und doch eigentlich erzwungene) Einsamkeit, man bewegt sich auf den eisigen Höhen des genialen Menschen und sehnt sich nach den warmen Niederungen des alltäglichen, unproblematischen Lebens. [...] Es gehört zum tragischen Verhängnis des modernen Künstlers, dass er in ewiger Sehnsucht lebt, ohne doch ehrlich eine Bindung wollen zu können, dass er den Fluch braucht, um nicht im Philiströs-Bürgerlichen zu versinken.[27]

However, a frequent theme in Sudermann's works is that of the agony of an artist trapped in a family or social life that cannot understand or keep pace with his talents or special needs. The attractions of bourgeois stability then become a suffocating prison of convention and time-honoured rituals that eventually result in tragedy. From *Sodoms Ende* (1891) to *Die Frau des Steffen Tromholt* (1927) the author presents us with no solution to this conflict, only a certain resignation at the end of his career.

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[27] Hermann Granzow, *Künstler und Gesellschaft im Roman der Goethezeit*, Diss. Bonn 1960 (Bonn; Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms Universität, 1960), p. 22.

Another frequent theme is the author's satirical view of the excessive adulation of genius. The criticism here is directed against the awed reverence paid to successful artists, who are treated as superhuman personalities, permitted a freedom which is not for ordinary mortals. Sudermann constantly portrays this freedom as nothing but selfishness and sexual licence and such admiration as demeaning and eventually maiming gifted people in the long run. These attitudes thus appear not only foolish but actually destructive to true genius, which he appears to consider nothing more than the blazing, yet short-lived fusion of talent and youth's magical freshness. Art in Sudermann's works thus becomes less a matter of genius than a combination of raw emotion, skill and unrelenting hard work.

Among all these artists, only Dagmar (*Die Sterne, die man nicht begehrt*) and Fritz Thilenius (*Wie die Träumenden*) do not conform to the type. The figure of Dagmar, while not fitting the general character pattern of artist, nevertheless demonstrates the same tension between the bourgeois world of respectability and the exotic, dazzling cosmopolitanism of the opera singer. She struggles to maintain her "good" reputation, going to extraordinary lengths to do so, because she is aware of the common gossip concerning the morals of artists. To protect her younger sister, she is compelled to starve all the natural impulses of her femininity. This conflict between desires and duty, between the yearning for freedom and the enforced conformity to society, ends only with the discovery of her sister's inborn corruption; thus we see that the dilemma of the artist trapped in this bourgeois world is stated at the very beginning of Sudermann's career. The character of Fritz Thilenius does not conform to type either; like the other figures in the works that revolve around World War I, he serves a specific function that has less to do with his profession than his role as a veteran returning from years of imprisonment in Russia. The sole link with the type is his acute sensitivity, which is, however, also well-suited to interact with the brave new Germany after the war, where many soldiers, shattered physically and emotionally by their experiences, find little understanding or sympathy from the loved ones they left behind. In all other matters, his talents receive little consideration.

On the whole, we see that Sudermann's artists are emotional, self-absorbed creatures steering a difficult course between conformity and unrestrained individualism. They are nearly always portrayed in contrast to stable, bourgeois characters, on whose lives they tend to have a catastrophic effect. While they are professionally impeccable in their ethics, the author revels nonetheless in depicting their susceptibility to the popular reverence granted them in their role as geniuses, so that while they display complete commitment to their work, they are often entangled in excesses that are the result of immaturity.

A. THE MAJOR CHARACTERS

1. Dagmar (*Die Sterne, die man nicht begehrt*, 1887)
2. The tenor (*Der verwandelte Fächer*, 1887)
3. The artist (*Die Freundin*, 1887)
4. Robert (*Noli me tangere*, 1887)
5. Willy Janikow (*Sodoms Ende*, 1891)
6. Professor Riemann (*Sodoms Ende*)
7. Magda Schwartze (*Heimat*, 1893)
8. The artist (*Das Ewig-Männliche*, 1896)
9. Kilian Czepanek (*Das hohe Lied*, 1908)
10. August Kellermann (*Das hohe Lied*)
11. Madame Nelson (*Die leidende Dritte*, 1908)
12. Claudian Claudianus (*Die Lobgesänge des Claudian*, 1914)
13. John Devereux (*Die gutgeschnittene Ecke*, 1915)
14. Karen (*Die gutgeschnittene Ecke*)
15. Ruth (*Die gutgeschnittene Ecke*)
16. Viktor (*Die gutgeschnittene Ecke*)
17. Lucille Jaczinska (*Die gutgeschnittene Ecke*)
18. van Doorn (*Das höhere Leben*, 1915)
19. Fritz Thilenius (*Wie die Träumenden*, 1921)
20. Steffen Tromholt (*Die Frau des Steffen Tromholt*, 1927)

Im Zwielicht. Zwanglose Geschichten (1887)

In this collection of short satirical anecdotes on the foibles of Berlin society, the figure of the artist appears several times. The major themes of alienation from bourgeois convention, personal responsibility and genius are portrayed here for the first time and do not change appreciably throughout Sudermann's career. In *Der verwandelte Fächer*, for example, he presents a tenor who mesmerizes the Berlin ladies with his aura of supposedly demoniac genius. Under a closer inspection, however, he is revealed as a conceited womanizer, spoilt by adulation, arrogant, insensitive and even indiscreet. While professional to his fingertips, he has nothing remotely romantic or sympathetic in his character. His behaviour at a party given in his honour proves the point:

> Er war einsilbig. - Das sind grosse Männer immer. Dann und wann warf er der Wirtin ein Kompliment zu, wie man einem Hündchen ein Knöchelchen zuwirft. Sie nagte glückselig daran. Frau Lili geruhte er zu übersehen. Desto eifriger beschäftigte er sich mit seinem Teller. Die Hummerpastete hatte seinen vollen Beifall, - von dem Lammrücken nahm er zweimal, - bei dem Anblick der Forellen flog ein erster Schimmer der Freude über sein düsteres Antlitz, - und die Poularden gewannen ihn vollends dem Leben wieder.[28]

The effect of this amusing story stems mainly from the contrast between Lili's naive illusions about his genius and the reality of the tenor's crude behaviour, a contrast which is clear to the reader but only dawns upon Lili at the very end.

Die Freundin depicts another unvarying theme; the inevitable tragedy that results from the collision of an artist's temperament with the ordered lives of bourgeois characters. The artist here is again hot-blooded, high-strung, accustomed to the affection and concern of others and infinitely egoistic. In his world, love is less an all-consuming passion than a passing infatuation; he is incapable of true love, loyalty or stable relationships. In his single-minded pursuit of his aging friend, he does not realise the tragic effect of his desires on a personality that requires firm moral values and stability as much as love. This theme is repeated later, when Willy seduces and destroys his foster-sister (*Sodoms Ende*) or when Steffen reduces Brigitta by word and deed to the level of a reluctantly tolerated burden. The cruelty of these artists, it must be emphasized, is never cold-blooded or calculated; it appears to spring not from any intrinsic malice, but from a curious combination of insensitivity, an uncontrollable urge to break free of all restrictions and lack of self-discipline. These character traits frequently combine to injure Sudermann's artists in one way or another. In *Noli me tangere*, for example, Robert's impetuous egoism leads him to destroy a promising love affair; his weakness lies not in his professional ethics or his talent, which cannot be faulted, but in a character that is without the maturity or selflessness needed to bridge all misunderstandings.

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[28] Hermann Sudermann, *Der verwandelte Fächer*, in *Romane und Novellen*, IV (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1930), 41.

The same destructive traits appear in the later collection of short stories titled *Die indische Lilie* (1908). *Die leidende Dritte* portrays Madame Nelson, the American singer, as a solid professional who combines sexual profligacy with more or less unimpaired business acumen. Her casual affair with the wealthy Herr von Karlstadt, conducted with little emotional involvement and great financial gain on her part, results in the moral and physical ruin of Mara von Karlstadt. Again, the character of an artist appears as self-centred and fickle, causing tragedy to strike those who cannot fathom this way of life.

Sodoms Ende (1891)

The theme of the controversial portrait in this play is also, logically, the theme of Willy Janikow's society. We see here an artist whose spark of genius is frittered away, partly due to his entanglement with a corrupt and corrupting society and partly by his own fatal character traits. As Hubert Walter says:

> Sudermann hat den Künstler zum Träger der Handlung gemacht. Er hat den Konflikt vertieft und verinnerlicht. Willys Tragik ist keine Situationstragik; Willy trägt seines Schicksals Sterne in seiner Brust.[29]

In *Sodoms Ende*, the author combines previous themes to create the first detailed portrayal of an artist in which the conflict of this type with society and the intricate nature of genius are brought into full focus. The character of Willy Janikow is, according to some accounts, based upon the tragic life of the artist Karl Stauffer-Bern, although recent criticism tends to regard this with scepticism.[30]

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[29] Hubert Walter, *Sudermann und die Franzosen*, p. 143.

[30] An article that deals with this question (which was, however, not available at the time of the completion of this thesis) is by Frederick Betz, titled "Willy Janikow and Karl

Here again we see the identical character traits, the same clash of convention and the artistic temperament and the same satirical treatment of society's romantic illusions about the artist and his genius.

Sodoms Ende shows us the artist trapped between a nouveau riche decadence that degrades his gifts and the loving but claustrophobic sphere of the family. Willy can find in neither the emotional security or freedom needed for the undisturbed pursuit of artistic excellence. Corrupted by one, he destroys the other. In Sigfried Hoefert's words about Willy's position in Adah's world:

> Er will dort künstlerische Erkenntnisse gewinnen, doch stellt es sich immer klarer heraus, dass wahres Kunststreben in einem solchen *Sumpf* (man wird vielfach an J. Hart's Drama erinnert) nicht gedeihen kann.[31]

Willy's character reveals the typical traits of emotionalism, egoism and vanity. While he is not evil, his lack of maturity, when combined with the subservience of his family and friends, proves ultimately catastrophical.

The true depths of Willy's nature appear for heightened contrast to the character of Riemann, who represents the better qualities of the bourgeois society that Willy despises. Unlike him, Riemann is no genius, possessing only common sense and moderate talent. His strong sense of ethics, however, enables him to recognize the destructive

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[30] (cont'd)Stauffer-Bern: A Note on the Model for the Artist-Figure in Hermann Sudermann's Play *Sodoms Ende*", which appeared in *Germanic Notes* 10 (1950), 58-61.

[31] Sigfried Hoefert, *Das naturalistische Drama* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1968), p. 43.

side to his friend's nature. When he says that he would have preferred not to have painted the portrait "Sodoms Ende", Weisse interprets this as envy. The real reason is, of course, that Riemann, from his bourgeois standpoint, instinctively senses in this dazzling celebration of sensuality the frightening aspect of genius, the uncontrollable egoism that can only end in sorrow.

The artist in *Sodoms Ende* is again represented as struggling for freedom on the one hand and the need for the emotional security of traditional relationships on the other. As Jürgen Viering puts it:

> Die Sehnsucht nach dem "Glück", die ein Leitmotiv aller Gesellschaftsdramen Sudermanns ist, ist immer eigentümlich zwiespältig: einerseits richtet sie sich auf das Aussergewöhnliche, ein Leben, das sich befreit hat von den Fesseln familiärer Verpflichtungen und bürgerlicher Wertmasstäbe, ein rauschhaft gesteigertes Leben, bei dessen Beschreibung gern eine Beziehung zu Wagner hergestellt wird [...] - andererseits aber richtet sich die Sehnsucht gerade auf das Glück einer engen zwischenmenschlichen Bindung, wie die Familie sie bietet.[32]

In Sudermann's portrayal, genius must protect itself from distractions; but it must also accept its share of responsibility, without which it cannot mature. The spark of genius cannot be nurtured only by liberty; it must be founded on integrity. A line must be drawn, the author seems to indicate, between the demands of artistic freedom and the inescapable burden of being born human, being part of a family, of a community, of the human race.

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[32] Jürgen Viering, "'Für Idyllen war kein Platz in meinem Leben'. Zur Familienthematik in Sudermanns Gesellschaftsdramen." in *Hermann Sudermann. Werk und Wirkung*, p. 120.

As a type, Willy, like the others, has little to recommend him. His sole positive quality appears to be his dedication to his art; however, having lost independence of will and self-respect in Adah's circle, he has also forfeited his talents. His character does not represent decadence but rather the vulnerability of genius to decadence.[33] Nervous, high-strung and totally self-absorbed, Willy exploits those who love him without thought. As in *Die Frau des Steffen Tromholt*, the domesticity the artist so thoroughly despises exists only to serve his needs. Willy is supported by his impoverished parents; he spends Kramer's money, but does not consider working in order to pay off the debt, but marrying an heiress; placed in charge of the child Kläre, he neglects her to such an extent that his parents are forced to intervene; and his all-consuming egoism culminates in the seduction of Kläre with the excuse that she herself desires it. Willy is thus Sudermann's most startlingly negative artist, being not so much pathetic as contemptible.

The criticism of the foolish and even destructive adulation of artists by society is repeated in *Sodoms Ende*.

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[33] As Eickhorst points out, decadence as a theme was less emphasized by the naturalists: "The works of the writers of the school of naturalism as represented by Bierbaum, Kretzer, Bleibtreu, and Sudermann, are peopled with a large number of decadent characters; but the treatment of decadence as a subtle psychological force is hardly, if ever, the theme of these writers as it usually is with writers dealing with the phenomenon of decadence"(William Eickhorst, *Decadence in German Fiction* [Denver: Alan Swallow, 1953], p. 18).

Adah encourages Willy in his eventually fatal course by persuading him that superior beings are permitted absolute liberty and, more subtly, that ideas of integrity or loyalty are for the common herd. Willy learns from her that his promiscuity and arrogance are part of a necessary Faustian urge to explore his potential as a genius:

> ... Ist das eine tolle Welt! ... Wenn man nur satt würde! ... Aber das ist ja zum Verrücktwerden ... Je mehr du hast, desto mehr willst du haben ... Und im Genuss verschmacht' ich nach Begierde, sagt Faust ... Das ist doch echt faustisch, was?[34]

To the spectator, of course, Willy's behaviour is revealed as merely immature. The people closest to him also encourage Willy in his behaviour by their awe of his talent. For them, he exists on a higher plane, being an artist, and his excesses are actually necessary for the struggling genius. Kramer, for example, imagines such superior beings as driven by "das Dämonische" (171), as incomprehensible in their exalted loneliness. As he says to Kläre:

> Das verstehen wir nicht, Fräulein Klärchen. Das gehört zum Genie. Immer friedlos - umhergetrieben. Immer so - na, wie ich schon sagte (*mit den Armen fuchtelnd*), friedlos - umhergetrieben. So war der Lord Byron auch. (170)

For him and Kläre, it is an actual honour to be permitted to live close to this prodigy. Thus the author satirizes the blind adulation of society by making it seem wholly naive and ridiculous. On the other hand, Riemann's reaction to all Willy's conceit is one of cynicism. While freely admitting his own bourgeois limitations, he dismisses Willy's Faustian aspirations as immature folly:

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[34] Hermann Sudermann, *Sodoms Ende*, p. 148.

> Du sprichst, als ob du siebzehn wärest! - Du - das, womit du da renommierst, hab' ich mir alles einmal an den Schuhsohlen abgelaufen und bin dann ein um so braverer Hausvater geworden. - Besonders mit dem alleinseligmachenden Laster bleib mir gefälligst vom Halse. - - - Ich sag' dir: das Laster hat einen minimalen Bildungswert. - - - Oder gehört wirklich so viel Seelengrösse dazu, mit den Ehefrauen Anderer heimlich gemietete Chambregarnies zu bevölkern? - - - Denn - seien wir mal ehrlich - darauf läuft das ganze Titanentum doch hinaus! (183)

For Riemann, Willy's genius is not divine, but an only too fragile offshoot of his youth, which can be as easily destroyed as it arises. And yet again, the excesses of the artistic temperament and social influence combine to ruin promising talents:

> ... Kaum hat so ein Kiek-in-die-Welt herausgefunden, dass ein Podex rund ist und dass ein Ahornblatt anders gemacht wird wie ein Lindenblatt, da schreien schon alle Vettern und Basen: Ein Genie, ein Genie! Na, und für das Genie sind die Weltgesetze nicht gemacht. - Das steht jenseits von Gut und Böse, wie man jetzt sagt - - - das kann lumpen, so viel es will. - - - Und beim ersten kleinen Erfolg sind wie die Raben, so das Aas wittern, auch die geistreichen Weiber da - und Alle, die ihrer Lüsternheit gern ein schöngeistiges Mäntelchen umhängen - - - "Seht doch, wie himmlisch er sich räkelt - - - das ist sicherlich ein Genie, denn sonst wär' er nicht so frech." - Der Teufel hole alle geistreichen Weiber!
>
> (183-184)

Sodoms Ende concludes with the inevitable tragedy; the artist discovers the path to freedom, but all escape is barred by his own social maladjustment. The purity and peace that Kitty has to offer cannot save Willy; he dies attempting to paint Kläre's corpse, in the bitter knowledge that he has not only squandered his talent but destroyed those who love him.[35] In *Sodoms Ende*, the concepts of artistic genius and bourgeois conventions are never really resolved. The author's own solution appears to be a compromise; the artist must be granted the freedom to pursue his vision but, on the other hand, he himself must accept certain social norms of private and public integrity without which his talent will degenerate into anarchy. Genius can flourish only in spontaneity, but it also has the responsibility to protect itself from corruption. As Riemann says to Willy:

> Ja, du bist ein Sonntagskind. - Du kannst lachen! Ich bin mein Lebtag mit meinem lastenden Gewissen schwer am Boden dahingekrochen. Ich bin Plebejer, denn ich bin Moralmensch, - und du bist Aristokrat, denn du stammst von den alten Griechen ab, in deren Hirnschädel das Schöne und das Gute in eins zusammenfloss. Aber *noblesse oblige*, mein Junge! - Einer wie du ist entweder König oder Lump ... und weil du die Vogelstimmen einmal verstehst, so nimm dir wenigstens die Mühe, sie zu deuten. (184)

Willy, like nearly all of Sudermann's artists, fails to achieve this compromise and is destroyed.

Heimat (1893)

In Sudermann's perhaps best-known play, an international diva returns to her provincial home after years of exile. Here, yet again, the artist is contrasted to the world and the values of the bourgeoisie and the resulting conflict demonstrates once more the impossibility of compromise and the need for compassion, if not understanding on both sides. The character of Magda Schwartze follows the general pattern, displaying positive as well as negative traits. Warm-hearted and generous, she is also portrayed as compulsively independent and egoistic. Again, Sudermann depicts Magda as the complete professional, taking pride in her superb gifts and enjoying the punishing schedule she subjects herself to. As she says to her family:

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[35] The image of an artist reaching for a paintbrush in moments of crisis appears more than once in Sudermann's works, e.g. in *Die Frau des Steffen Tromholt*, where Steffen attempts to paint Brigitta's corpse before the funeral; as such, it is yet another manifestation of the Sudermann artist's obsession with his or her work.

> Ja, was denkt ihr von mir? Glaubt ihr, ich bin so frei, wie ich aussehe? Eine ganz müde, abgehetzte Magd bin ich, die nur glücklich ist, wenn ihr die Peitsche im Nacken sitzt.[34]

An extra dimension to the author's concept of artistic genius appears in *Heimat*, that of art as the extension of a complete personality. Only with suffering and experience can the full potential of the artist be realized. Magda, young and naive, does not grow into an artist in the true sense of the term until her betrayal by Keller and her subsequent battle to survive and protect her illegitimate child. Having passed through this baptism of fire, she sees her genius as the end result of her hard-won maturity. As she says to Keller:

> ... Und nun will ich dir auch sagen, weswegen ich dir Dank schuldig bin. - Ein dummes, ahnungsloses Ding war ich, das seine Freiheit genoss wie ein losgelassener Affe ... Durch dich aber wurd' ich zum Weibe. Was ich in meiner Kunst erreicht habe, was meine Persönlichkeit vermag, alles verdank' ich dir ... (319-320)

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[34] Hermann Sudermann, *Heimat*, p. 282.

Yet again, Sudermann portrays the artist in contrast to a bourgeois society that neither understands nor condones her lifestyle. Magda's flamboyance, her wealth and overpowering elegance, her free and easy manner are compared effectively to the inflexible dignity and provincial prejudices of the Schwartze family and their immediate circle.[37] The net result of her intrusion into this orderly society is catastrophe. She resents their provincialism and bourgeois morality;[38] her return is actually a personal celebration of her own longed-for liberation from the stifling confines of patriarchal authority. However, in spite of all her resentment, she herself cannot quite break free. On her arrival, unsuspected emotions come to the surface, revealing the ineradicable memories of childhood warmth and security that bind the individual to the family. In answer to the pastor's question as to whether she regrets her decision to stay, she says:

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[37] As Kübler points out, glamour is an essential factor in the selection of the artist as role model in women's literature as well: 'Der Lebensstil von Malerinnen, Sängerinnen und Virtuosinnen hat demgegenüber weitaus mehr "glamour" und gesellschaftliches Prestige, ist also an romanhaftem Erzählstoff ergiebiger. Dazu kommt, dass die Präsentation des Aufstiegs von Künstlerinnen und ihres Erfolges den Autorinnen die Möglichkeit bietet, die Egalitätsthematik aufzugreifen und die beliebten zeitgenössischen Geschlechtslegenden von der künstlerischen Inferiorität der Frau zu widerlegen'. (Gunhild Kübler, *Die soziale Aufsteigerin. Wandlungen einer geschlechtsspezifischen Rollenzuschreibung im deutschen Roman* [Bonn: Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundmann, 1982], p. 73).

[38] There is an interesting comparison to be made here between Hartleben's *Die sittliche Forderung* and Sudermann's *Heimat*. Morality plays, as always, an essential role in the latter's works; but Hartleben's Rita, whose life closely parallels Magda's, is wholly unconcerned by the sexual taboos of her bourgeois society.

> Nein, mein Freund, ich bereue nicht. Aber es geht merkwürdig zu in mir. Ich sitze wie in einem lauen Bade, so weich und warm ist mir. Das sogenannte deutsche Gemüt, das spukt wieder, und ich hatt's mir schon so schön abgewöhnt. Mein Herz, das sieht aus wie eine Weihnachtsnummer der Gartenlaube. (305)

This idyll is short-lived; from the beginning Schwartze struggles to reestablish his authority and Magda resists, though hampered by compassion and sentimentality. Diamond sees in this clash of wills the essentially modern battleground of old and new ideals:

> Here the conception of individuality or unfettered personal freedom forms the main theme. Magda embodies the priciple of self-development; her father the principle of authority and conventional morality. It is the conflict between the old and the new generation, between the old-fashioned father with his patriarchal idea of authority and home, the father who sees the world through his military notions of pride and honor, and the modern daughter with her passion to live her own life and with her new ideas of individual development.[39]

The independence and individuality Diamond refers to are the logical consequence of the artist's temperament, which must inevitably come into conflict with the world of the bourgeoisie. The invasion of this world by the artist again ends in tragedy; the colonel dies of a stroke, refusing his errant daughter his final blessing. The sphere of the artist and the bourgeois have come into contact once more; and, once more, the result is the destruction of the latter and lasting damage to the other. While the issues here are further complicated by the references to anarchical new ideas, such as emancipation for women, the basic theme remains the alienation of the artist from traditional society and his love-hate relationship with a world he needs but cannot live in.

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[39] William Diamond, "Hermann Sudermann", *Monatshefte für deutschen Unterricht*, 21 (1929), 157.

Das hohe Lied (1908)

The musician Kilian Czepanek is yet another artist figure that conforms to the type in all respects. The theme is repeated of an artist trapped in the stranglehold of traditional society and domesticity. Vain, fickle, spoilt by the constant adoration of his family and his audiences, Kilian Czepanek is another high-strung, egoistic profligate on the lines of Willy Janikow. Like Willy, he cannot reconcile his artist's temperament with the dreary bourgeois existence he despises so much. Both his wife and daughter are aware of his distaste for the mundane problems of running a household:

> Beide, Mama und Lili, sorgten ja für ihn mit nie nachlassender Begeisterung. Denn beide sahen in ihm eine Art Paradiesvogel, der sich durch einen glücklichen Zufall zwischen den Wänden eines Zimmers gefangen hat und den es nun mit Aufbietung aller Kräfte im Käfig zu erhalten gilt.[40]

Kilian's egoism, like that of Willy Janikow and Steffen Tromholt, is boundless. While professionally he is beyond reproach, his obsession with the loss of his freedom leads him to abandon his family without a qualm to poverty and intense suffering. There are several parallels here with *Die Frau des Steffen Tromholt*; like Czepanek, Tromholt feels that his marriage is a prison; like Frau Czepanek, Brigitta exists only as an extension of her famous husband. Like Czepanek too, Steffen regards his wife's loss of beauty (even during pregnancy) as a personal insult to his sense of aesthetics. Perhaps most significantly, both artists reveal almost no family feeling. Their careers take precedence over everything, even the welfare of their families. Again, the artist's brief sojourn in the ordered sphere of the bourgeois has been responsible for sorrow, due not to any real fault of either party, but rather the inability of each to comprehend fully the nature of the other.

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[40] Hermann Sudermann, *Das hohe Lied*, in *Romane und Novellen*, V (Stuttgart und Berlin: J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1930), 6.

Die entgötterte Welt (1915)

This trilogy of plays is, as the author makes clear in the introductory verses, intended to portray the increasing corruption of German society in the years just preceding the war. The advent of World War I was seen by many (e.g. Hermann Bahr) as the ultimate storm that would unite, cleanse and strengthen the German nation forever. Sudermann was no exception; *Die entgötterte Welt* shows us a Germany plagued by immorality, loss of integrity, a growing contempt for innocence and the crumbling of the traditional bastions of faith and humanism under the onslaught of popular atavistic doctrines. All these evils, the author implies, will be swept away by the spirit of self-sacrifice inspired by the war.

In both *Die gutgeschnittene Ecke* and *Das höhere Leben*, the artist, as representative of a more anarchical life-style, plays an essential role. The economic boom in Germany and the resulting social and cultural corruption form the theme of *Die gutgeschnittene Ecke*. Several artists appear in this play; while their professions vary, all but one are united in their animosity towards the solid, wealthy bourgeois society they live in. They are ruthlessly dedicated to achieving fame and will use and discard any individual to gain their ends. Again, Sudermann portrays them in contrast to the honest, straightforward bourgeois figures such as Viktor Brandstädter and his father. In this play, the author's sympathies are squarely upon the side of traditional society and against artists like Ruth or John, who are depicted as egoistic, manipulative and unscrupulous parasites upon the society they profess to despise. In this bleakest of works, artistic natures are shown as breaking down family ties and eventually destroying all personal integrity. The theme thus remains the same; the artist must learn to pay his or her dues as a human being. He or she must achieve the delicate balance between freedom and the acknowledgement of responsibility. While *Die gutgeschnittene Ecke* does not end in tragedy, one may nevertheless foretell the degradation awaiting Ruth, who uses her body to further her ambition, or the loneliness of Karen or even the contemptibility of John Devereux's future existence as Lucille's associate.

In the comedy *Das höhere Leben*, van Doorn, the musician, is a light-hearted, fickle character who represents a wandering existence alien to the solid bourgeois traditions of industry and stability. A gifted personality, he is far less negative than the other artists in Sudermann's works; however, while his charm is undeniable, it is also clear that he is essentially vain, incapable of maintaining a meaningful relationship. Again, one detects the author's impatience with the exaggerated respect of society for such people. The romantic glamour that surrounds van Doorn is the catalyst that causes the final rupture in Lola's marriage. For Adelaide, he is the "Meister", a genius to be courted, flattered, and even importuned for sexual favours. For the audience, however, van Doorn remains a pleasant but superficial character whose real passion is reserved exclusively for his art.

Die Frau des Steffen Tromholt (1927)

Perhaps the clearest, most poignant statement of the dilemma of the artist trapped in bourgeois society and by bourgeois conventions is to be found in Sudermann's semi-autobiographical novel *Die Frau des Steffen Tromholt* about his long and tempestuous marriage to Clara Lauckner. In this work, the painter Steffen Tromholt, the darling of fashionable Berlin society, falls in love with the provincial, but gifted young widow Brigitta Senius. In spite of all forebodings about the upheaval this step will cause in his bohemian life-style, he marries her, feeling that a stable middle-class institution such as marriage and family would offer a haven from the rampaging excitement of Berlin:

> In diesem Winkelchen war er kein Fremder mehr, hier gehörte er hin, hier umgab ihn Liebe, Gehorsam und Reinheit. Hierher wagte sich nichts von dem Raub und den Ränken der Welt, vor dieser Schwelle scheute selbst das in purpurne Passion sich verkleidende Laster. Hier bot sich Zuflucht, als umklammerte man die Hörner des grossen Altars.[41]

A similar sentiment is expressed by Pütz when he says:

> Das hohe Ziel und die Verachtung der "Nebelwelt" schliessen nicht aus, dass der Künstler sich trotzdem nach dem normalen Leben sehnt. Er hält seinen Verlockungen nur mit Mühe stand und ist oft geneigt, in die Dienstbarkeit der Welt zu treten.[42]

Yet again, the artist is depicted as wholly self-absorbed, reserving his true passion for his craft and incapable of maintaining a stable relationship within a bourgeois framework. While Brigitta dedicates herself totally to Steffen and his career, Steffen himself is portrayed as unable to keep up the appearance of a traditional family man. Domesticity repels and bores him. As he says to Brigitta:

> ... Ich aber hasse nichts so sehr wie die Bürgerlichkeit - was man so Gartenlaubenkitsch nennt ... Ehe, Familie, Kinderkriegen, Pantoffeln und häusliche Lampe - das sind alles Greuel für mich. (29)

This basic egoism in Steffen's character is made clear from the very beginning. He loves his self-sacrificing mother, but remarks that he could not have lived with her petty bourgeois morality; for the uncle who rejects him, he has no interest whatsoever; and when his only child, a daughter, is born, he is aware only of mild curiosity and a certain aghast astonishment that this should be happening to a bohemian like him:

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[41] Hermann Sudermann, *Die Frau des Steffen Tromholt*, p. 46.

[42] Heinz Peter Pütz, *Kunst und Künstlerexistenz bei Nietzsche und Thomas Mann* (Bonn: H. Bouvier u. Co., 1963), pp. 42-43.

> Auch für sein eigen Fleisch und Blut hegte er wenig väterliche Gefühle. Was da dröselnd in den Kissen lag, was zur Unzeit gefüttert und zu einer anderen Unzeit umgebettet sein wollte, war ihm bestenfalls ein Gegenstand der Neugier [...] Und immer wieder, wenn er das fünfköpfige Menschenhäuflein vor sich sah, das nun zu ihm gehörte wie sein eigenes Leben, fasste er sich vor den Kopf und fragte im stillen: "Was ist mit mir geschehen? Träume ich, bin ich verwunschen, kann das Wirklichkeit sein?" (91)

The contrast between artist and bourgeoisie and the suffering they are capable of inflicting upon each other are never clearer than in this novel. Brigitta in her placidity represents purity, peace and the stable moral values of her origins; Steffen, on the other hand, sees the only valid morality in the free exercise of his talents. The intolerable strain of domesticity, the boredom of life in this provincial town, the banality of their Philistine social circle prevent him from any constructive action. His marriage has destroyed the sense of freedom essential for true artistic creativity: even the intelligent, undemanding love of his wife appears only another link in the invisible fetters that bind him. The sparkling excitement of Berlin society, the constant stresses and demands, the sexual fireworks of his bachelor life, the competitive urge to strive for perfection, all are lacking in this peaceful idyll of domestic felicity. Thus Steffen's eventual insistence, after years of marriage, upon an ostentatious life-style is only an expression of his frustration at his imprisonment and the consequent inability to produce works demonstrating more than merely superlative technique.

There is a definite parallel in the way his royal mistress turns the tables upon Steffen. Elisabeth's insistence upon absolute freedom and her refusal to allow her lover the slightest influence in her life correspond exactly to the unthinking cruelty of Steffen's treatment of his wife. In this novel there is no question of allotting blame to either party; both artist and bourgeois cannot change their basic temperaments or needs, and thus they live on, inflicting untold pain upon each other, the one through frustration, the other through love. Paul Whitaker has pointed out the existence of the same theme in the early play *Die drei Reiherfedern*:

> To understand properly the fundamental character of the marriage problem in Sudermann's life, it should be pointed out that he had early developed the feeling that bourgeois society, with its insistence upon conformity and the subordination of the individual to convention, is a tyrant which stifles genius and fosters mediocrity. The serious artist finds himself engaged, perforce, in a constant struggle to maintain his independence in the face of the demands of social convention. Thus a conventional marriage with its myriad restraints and demands can result only in an irreconcilable conflict between duty to Family and duty to Art.[43]

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[43] Paul K. Whitaker, "A Key to Sudermann's *Die drei Reiherfedern*", in *Monatshefte*, 48 (1956), 79.

The novel ends with the moral victory of Brigitta. In death, she succeeds at last in winning Steffen's complete love. Thus the subsequent destruction of the portrait "The Deluge", symbol of Steffen's uneven artistic career, signifies the final extinction of all his hopes and frustrations and his acceptance of the fact that while his work has not lived up to its potential, it has nevertheless, through Brigitta's gentle influence, been remarkably fruitful.

SUMMARY

Understandably perhaps, we may conclude that in no other category do the author's own experiences play so prominent a role. The theme of alienation from bourgeois society, the fatuous idolatry of successful artists, the controversy associated with talent, all correspond to Sudermann's attitudes and experiences in over thirty years as a public figure. In the same way that the ideas do not appreciably change, the character traits revealed by the artist type do not vary. From *Im Zwielicht* to *Die Frau des Steffen Tromholt*, they are portrayed as of lower or middle-class origin and as hedonists of the first order, arrogant, fickle, completely dedicated to their careers to the exclusion of everything else, and with all the insensitivity and self-absorption of spoilt and gifted children. They thoroughly enjoy their preeminent position and the adulation of traditional society, but react with animosity to the thought that they should become a permanent part of it and accept its responsibilities. Sudermann nearly always depicts them in contrast to bourgeois society and bourgeois morality. In Richter's words:

> Bei Sudermann beschränkt sich die Gegenüberstellung von Bürger und Künstler auf das Gebiet der bürgerlichen Moral. Er zeigt keinen einsamen und auf sich selbst geworfenen Künstler, der einen Aussenseiter der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft darstellt. [...] Dem Autor geht es anscheinend bei der Schilderung des Künstlers ausschliesslich um die Dialektik zwischen Künstlerexistenz und bürgerlichem Milieu. Hierbei kritisiert er das unethische Verhalten des angeblichen Künstlers.[44]

The general theme remains the artist's difficulties in achieving a compromise between the inflexible demands of genius and the restrictions placed by prejudice or convention upon their freedom. This not necessarily positive portrayal of the artist type acquires harsher, more hostile overtones in the 1915 trilogy *Die entgötterte Welt*, in which the artist's fundamental need for liberty is transformed into a spirit of total narcissism. The artists here appear as parasites on an industrious bourgeois society which they denigrate as soulless on the one hand and exploit to the utmost on the other.

Even in the late novel *Die Frau des Steffen Tromholt* there is no lasting solution to the dilemma of the artist trapped in this world. Steffen's genius lies in the short-lived fire of bohemian liberty and youth; while he has forfeited much through marriage, it is significant that his bachelor friends have undergone the same deadly creeping decay of ambition and talent with the progress of the years. Bourgeois domesticity may have robbed Steffen of his genius, but in the end, it is Brigitta's encouragement and critical eye that keep him from actual disaster, so that he remains on the same level as his contemporaries, a skilled craftsman with respectable achievements. There is no simplistic depiction, therefore, of the complex problems of love, loyalty, despair and alienation involved in every contact of the artist with the ordered sphere of bourgeois society.

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[44] Gunter Walter Richter, "Die Gesellschaftskritik im Prosawerk Hermann Sudermanns", pp. 204-205.

Sudermann's portrayal of the artist thus appears to be, on the whole, that of the liberal bourgeoisie with strongly moralistic overtones, revealing respect for the aims and uncompromising nature of this gifted elite but also the unwavering view that the artist must respond with integrity and tact to the demands of society. Linked with this is the author's constant attack upon the excessive and often damaging admiration that society offers the artist. Sudermann appears to consider genius less a matter of divine grace than the result of natural talent, maturity and unrelenting self-discipline. Without maturity and social sensitivity, the artist in Sudermann's works may succeed in his profession, but still fails as a human being. Without self-discipline and freedom from mundane cares, he fails as an artist. Tragedy inevitably strikes when Sudermann's artists struggle to reconcile these warring elements with their troubled links to traditional society; and almost none succeed in preserving their integrity in the outcome.

Thus it is a surprisingly pessimistic portrait of the artist type that we see here, being one that ignores the joy of creativity, concentrating rather on the irreconcilable tensions that lie between the world of the boheme and the world of the bourgeoisie.

IX. CONCLUSION

In the final analysis, it is possible to detect several common characteristics in every type, which in their turn reveal fresh insights into Sudermann's personal vision of and confrontation with the world around him.

In the category of royalty, for example, the common and most obvious theme is that of a decadence on this rarified level of society, which influences common physical and psychological traits. Nevertheless, Sudermann's portrayal is not entirely unsympathetic; these characters are shown as prisoners of their exalted birth, trapped in an emotionally barren world that degrades their existence into banality and deprives them of all real freedom. The special quality of this group lies in the fact that it permits the author to establish in the most extreme form the damage done to the human psyche by convention.

In the category of aristocratic politicians and administrators, we see that the traditionalism of the nobility is emphasized. These figures belong solely to the Conservative Party; liberal aristocrats do not appear. Sudermann portrays the aristocracy as inflexible, even bigoted, clinging to outdated privileges.

On the other hand, the most vividly portrayed category is without doubt that of the Junkers. They appear generally vigorous and positive; physically and temperamentally, there is hardly any change in type throughout Sudermann's career.

The major theme in this group seems to be the Junker love of his land and his traditions. The accent here is also on personal dilemmas affecting these strong personalities, such as illicit affairs or questions of conscience. Social criticism as such is conspicuously lacking; the emphasis is on human conflicts, on the joy of success as farmers, on the deep attachment to family and property. Richter, however, sees in Sudermann's prose works a more critical attitude towards the Junkers:

> Sudermann geht es bei der Schilderung des Junkers um eine kritische Verdeutlichung des zeitentfremdeten Elitedenkens dieser Gesellschaftschicht. Er demonstriert, dass es dem Junker nicht gelungen ist, sich der veränderten Welt anzupassen, so dass er nun vom Bürger belächelt wird.[1]

On the other hand, Sudermann's Junkers, while demonstrating a certain inflexibililty with regard to social change, are also undeniably well-equipped to adjust to a swiftly changing world, not due to any liberal views on their part, but rather because of their unlimited capacity for hard work. Even in *Der tolle Professor*, Sudermann satirizes the bigotry and rigid views of these men, but does not fail to point out their intrinsic toughness and efficiency. For this reason, Sieburth's reactions to the Junkers is mixed; on the one hand, he finds them arrogant, chauvinistic and lacking in any real polish; on the other hand, he does not fail to detect a hidden splendour in their robust lack of pretence and their complete and wholly natural dedication as Junkers to their sovereign and their country.[2] Therefore, where criticism directed against this class does occur in Sudermann's works, it is directed mainly against three common failings: Junker political conservatism, their social inflexibility and their lack of intellectual prowess.

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[1] Gunter Walter Richter, "Die Gesellschaftskritik im Prosawerk Hermann Sudermanns", p. 149.

The small group of aristocratic figures involved with a trade typically concentrates on the social and personal problems resulting from this choice of profession rather than on the details of the particular job. The common factor here appears to be the general rootlessness of these men, set free from the strict restrictions of the Army or Junker tradition. Their trade is only important inasmuch as it permits them a far greater degree of social frivolity.

Perhaps the most conventional portrayal of any type in Sudermann's works remains that of the officer. It is a generally negative appraisal, though again, the primary message is the criticism of a claustrophobic Army society that forces the individual into a rigid code of public and private attitudes that is essentially destructive. Sudermann's officer type is very closely linked to the aristocracy; only in post-war years does the bourgeois Army man appear on the scene, e.g. Heinz and Willi Wölfert (*Notruf*).

A very direct expression of Sudermann's sympathies appears in his portrayal of his Jewish figures. While he does make use of specific stereotypes that emphasize the intelligence and sensitivity of this race, the overall impression is of compassion for an abused and misunderstood minority. Though his portrayal is initially very negative, it later develops into an open attack on antisemitism. As such, the depiction of this group of characters demonstrates an extraordinary feat of empathy on the part of a non-Jewish writer at a time of increasing antisemitism in Germany.

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[2] Hermann Sudermann, *Der tolle Professor*, pp. 501-507.

In the category of peasants, Sudermann seems to concentrate on rural stability as contrasted to creeping urban decay. He achieves his most lyrical prose in the works dealing with this type, in which humanity is stripped to its primeval form and life ebbs and flows in the lap of Nature. The emphasis here is on the harmony and health of peasant society, but there is no specific message.

Sudermann's pastors, on the other hand, demonstrate the author's interest in the problems of the Church in adjusting to a changing society. There is a strong attack at the beginning of his career against the hypocrisy and bigotry of this institution, but in later years, uniform positive traits appear. The general theme here seems to be the problem of reconciling faith with intellect and humanism with dogma. The author's own position appears to be a compromise between these two positions, in which bigotry is rejected in favour of a humane, rational acceptance of social responsibility.

The worker type in Sudermann's novels and plays receives a very superficial treatment, with only limited details on issues specifically affecting the proletariat. It starts off negatively, but becomes gradually more balanced. The Sudermann worker, without exception, serves a definite secondary function to the main message of the play or novel. This might imply a concentration of the author's energies upon the glamorous upper strata of society instead of the dreariness of proletarian life, devoid of even the scenic beauty and peaceful traditions that nourish the peasants in their daily labour.

The student type also begins with a negative portrayal and becomes eventually more even-handed; Sudermann seems to have reserved his satire for this group, whose function appears to be to act as the contrast to more sophisticated figures in matters of political and social controversy.

Perhaps the most direct expression of the author's own position on his life and his career lies in his depiction of the artist. Artists in his works are the pagan children of Dionysos, fighting against entrapment by a bourgeois society. This society, once in contact, invariably damages them in two ways. Some of Sudermann's artist types are destroyed by popular insistence on the dissipation expected of such a bohemian profession; others are defeated by their struggle against the conformity imposed upon them by the traditional institutions of marriage, family, etc. Sudermann's artists are all outsiders confronted with the same dilemma; on the one hand, they require the emotional stability offered by traditional bourgeois society, but on the other hand, yielding to this temptation causes only untold suffering for all concerned. This is by no means an uncommon portrayal of the artist in conflict with the bourgeoisie, but it is lent undeniable life and immediacy by the author's own extreme difficulties as an artist and a reluctant family man.

Upon summing up the analyses of these various types in Sudermann's works, we may come to certain conclusions. The interest of the author is very clearly concentrated on the upper echelons of society, their particular attitudes, problems and life-style. The most caustic criticism appears in the works dealing with these figures, but it appears to be directed mainly against the society that is responsible for their aberrant behaviour.

There is an unmistakable tendency on the part of the author to typecast his characters so that fundamental traits almost never vary, even though other qualities may alter the figure for good or bad. As Richter says:

> Auffällig bei Sudermanns Menschendarstellung ist die Tendenz zur Typisierung, in der die Individualität stark hinter dem sozialen Rollenschema zurücktritt und oft zum Klischee oder auf blosse Äusserlichkeiten verkürzt wird. Es ist kennzeichnend für Sudermann, dass eine begrenzte Auswahl von Figuren-Typen, die eine bestimmte Gesellschaftsklasse repräsentieren, während der gesamten Schaffenszeit immer wieder auftaucht.[3]

The older generation of officers, for example, may be portrayed as positive or negative, but their basic traits of conservatism, ruthlessness and inflexibility never change.

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[3] Gunter Walter Richter, "Die Gesellschaftskritik im Prosawerk Hermann Sudermanns", p. 288.

The majority of the types tend to be depicted initially as more negative and stereotyped, e.g. the sly Jew in *Frau Sorge* or the arrogant, frivolous officers in *Die Ehre*. As Sudermann's career progresses, the stereotyping is discarded in favour of a more balanced approach, though the original traits rarely change. In Richter's words:

> Aber auch in dieser Gestaltungstechnik wird eine Modifizierung über die Jahre erkannbar [sic], denn der satirischen Überzeichnung des Frühwerks folgt eine gemässigtere Darstellungsweise in den späteren Perioden. Die Leitfiguren bleiben jedoch als solche bestehen; nur werden die Umwelt und deren Problematik komplexer und daher auch menschlich widerspruchsvoller gestaltet.[4]

The fundamental basis for the portrayal of every type remains, however, Hermann Sudermann's own problematic perspective on his life, his career and the infinite complexities of his society. We see in him a writer living in two worlds and completely at home in neither, torn emotionally between the stable traditions of bourgeois society and the excitement of new and stimulating ideals. More than anything, the conclusion that comes to light in this analysis of types is the fact that Sudermann is trying to reconcile the irreconcilable, that is, the clash between antithetical systems of values. Thus, while creating powerful individuals who delight in the full flowering of their own personalities and talents, he also pays tribute indirectly to the traditional bourgeois values of dignity, hard work and firm ethical norms.

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[4] Gunter Walter Richter, p. 289.

All of Sudermann's works may be interpreted as the result of the attempt, however unsuccessful, to harmonize the demands of individuality with the specific social codes that would lend this individuality its necessary ethical basis. This is not to say that Sudermann did not make a definite distinction between meaningless conventions and the natural dictates of a social conscience. His rejection of such convention is matched by his acceptance of the need for a personal commitment to serve the human race. It is this middle-of-the-road position that confuses many critics, who reject his ethics as false and his progressive concepts as half-hearted. In Sudermann's work we detect the need of the author to defend liberal ideas, to protect the human spirit from the twin threats of soul-destroying convention and empty rebellion, and yet to preserve a code of civilized ethics that will lend integrity to the individual's search for happiness. Otto Heller sees Sudermann's work as having a dual purpose:

> ... rudely to shake the decaying structure of social morality now resting largely on hollow convention and compromises, but at the same time to stay the total collapse of society and invigorate it with his own sustaining aspirations.[5]

Sudermann's types all reflect this fundamental problem in varying degrees. Without honour even the most rugged individualist must destroy himself. Leo undergoes the torment of the damned because he realises that he has betrayed the friend who trusted him. All his Junker pride cannot avail him against the pangs of his conscience, and his old victorious nature only returns when he has confessed everything to Ulrich (*Es War*). On the other hand, those who depend blindly on convention to guide them are equally lost in a world which is constantly changing around them. A example is provided by the officers' widows (*Notruf*), who are helpless in a society that has no time for their petty snobbery and pretensions.

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[5] Otto Heller, *Studies in Modern German Literature. Sudermann. Hauptmann. Women Writers of the Nineteenth Century* (Freeport N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1967), p. 12.

From Paul (*Frau Sorge* [1887]), who gives up his ambitions for a life of subservience to his family, to Purzelchen (*Purzelchen* [1928]), who embarks with all the fresh optimism of youth on a quest for love in a sordid post-war Germany devoid of such innocence, this theme persists, the expression of doubt of a man who himself could come to no lasting solution in either his public or his personal life.

The tendency to concentrate on individual psychological development, the easy, accurate grasp of milieu, the traits of pessimism and resignation, combined with the insistence on the need for an ethical quality to life would seem to rank Sudermann, if at all, nearer to the tradition of bourgeois realism. Considering Sudermann as a Naturalist has proved fruitless and actually counter-productive. In Boetticher's words:

> Naturalistische Darstellungsweise ist bei Sudermann niemals Selbstzweck - bezeichnend ist schon, dass er

> auf den Dialekt verzichtet - das Ethische bleibt ihm stets die Hauptsache, und dadurch ist er über den Naturalismus hinweggeschritten.[6]

Richter places Sudermann with neither the naturalist school nor the realists.[7]

For Kurt Lothar Tank, however, many of the current fallacies and misconceptions about this writer stem from the popular critical tendency to rank him with the Naturalists.[8] In his 1971 essay he points out:

> Mit diesem Durchbruch zu einem sensationell umwitterten Erfolg beginnt sogleich die Tragik Sudermanns, das grosse Missverständnis. Man sieht in ihm einen Parteigänger des Naturalismus, einen Vertreter der neuen Richtung, setzt ihn in eine falsche Beziehung zu Gerhart Hauptmann. In Wahrheit gehört Sudermann trotz einiger Anleihen bei Zola und Ibsen eher zu den bürgerlichen Realisten, die um die Mitte des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts die Literatur bestimmten.[9]

Therefore, in the final analysis, Hermann Sudermann's types reflect not only his fundamental allegiance to realism and his superficial acknowledgement of other literary movements, but also his unchanging and deeply moral perspective on life. His standpoint represents less a yearning for the stability of the "good old times" than an instinctive and quite inflexible rejection of a social emancipation that lacks an ethical basis. His works reveal a personality that stands on the threshold of the brave new world, determined to seize the freedom offered, yet recognizing the necessity of preserving the values without which such freedom becomes anarchy. When linked, his characters form a complex mosaic that makes up the sum total of a poetic vision that celebrates among other things the wisdom of innocence, the tenacity of humanity and, above all, the need to harmonize self-respect and liberation.

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[6] G. Boetticher, *Hermann Sudermann. Frau Sorge* in *Deutsche Dichter des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts. Aesthetische Erläuterungen für Schule und Haus*. Ed. Prof. Dr. Otto Lyon (Berlin und Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1903), p. 4.

[7] Gunter Walter Richter, "Die Gesellschaftskritik im Prosawerk Hermann Sudermanns", p. 292.

[8] Cf., Kurt Busse, *Hermann Sudermann. Sein Werk und sein Wesen*, p. 6.

[9] Kurt Lothar Tank, "Vorwort" in *Hermann Sudermann. Die Reise nach Tilsit. Prosa und Dramen*. (München: Langen Müller Verlag, 1971), p. 656.

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